

The Sci-Fi Channel shakes up '96 in *The Anti-Gravity Room*.

BY ALLISON VILLONE

THE ANTI-GRAVITY ROOM is the new, original magazine series airing in the U.S., featuring a volcanic explosion of today's hottest media — including comic books, games, CD-ROMS, animation, movies, music, and more. Reviews, interviews, and on-location reports are featured, and viewers get a chance to respond to the hosts.

Each host of *The Anti-Gravity Room* has a different area of pop culture expertise. With a

collection of more than 3,000 comic books and a background of working in comic book stores, eighth-grader Nick Scoullar is the Room's resident comic expert, uniquely qualified to provide an in-depth look at the artists, writers, and publishers in the phenomenally pop-

ular comic book industry. Before stepping into *The Anti-Gravity Room*, Nick hosted his own public cable access show in Manhattan, on which he reviewed and took calls concerning comic books. Phil Guerrero, *The Anti-Gravity Room*'s video game and CD-ROM expert, is known to Canadian viewers as host of YTV's *The Zone*. He presents a cutting-edge perspective on what's new and hot in cyberspace. And stand-up comedienne Shashi Bhatia provides savvy commentary on today's media. *The Anti-Gravity Room* airs in the U.S. Fridays at 8:30 a.m. ET* and 9:30 p.m.,

1:30 a.m., and Saturdays at 11 a.m. Sci-Fi continues to push the envelope with more innovative, original TV. Debuting in the U.S. early in 1996*: *scifi live online* is American television's first regularly scheduled prime time interactive series. On each episode of *scifi live online*, computer users provide live, real-time comments about Sci-Fi Channel programming as it airs. These comments appear at the bottom of the TV screen during the broadcasts for all viewers to see. Episodes of classic science fiction series such as *Lost in Space*, *Planet of the Apes*, and *Voyage to the Bottom of the Sea* are featured on a rotating basis. *Scifi live online* was inspired by the success and popularity of an earlier Sci-Fi Channel experiment with computer interactivity during late night runs of *The Prisoner*. Check listings for premiere date.

The Sci-Fi Channel in the U.S. kicks off the New Year with some very cool, very special programming. First, viewers will have an opportunity to see — unedited — some of the most famous episodes from Rod Serling's acclaimed anthology series back to back in a *Twilight Zone Marathon*. The marathon begins Sunday, December 31, at 7 P.M. ET,* and continues through Monday, January 1, concluding at 7:30 P.M.

Another classic comes to life on Sci-Fi in the U.S. in January with *It Came from Outer Space 2*, an original "Planetary Premiere" movie. In this remake of the Jack Arnold feature originally produced in 1953, photographer Jack Putnam returns to his sleepy, desert hometown, expecting to capture routine pictures of the barren military base. When a freakish storm sweeps through the area, Jack and his fellow townspeople are threatened by an alien force that depletes their precious water supply and imitates all earthly forms, man or beast. This film, presented exclusively on the Sci-Fi Channel, airs Saturday, January 27, at 8 P.M. and 12 A.M. It will also be seen Sunday, January 28, at 5 P.M., following a

3 P.M. airing of the original 1953 motion picture.

American Sci-Fi programming gets simian in January with a movie theme week featuring all your ape favorites, hosted by Roddy McDowall, who stars in four of these creature classics: *Planet of the Apes*, *Beneath the Planet of the Apes*, *Continued on page 28*

Aliens take over the bodies of local folk in *It Came From Outer Space 2*, an original "Planetary Premiere" movie. Below, *The Anti-Gravity Room*'s hosts, Phil Guerrero and Nick Scoullar are specialists in pop culture.



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The New Year's early entries; artful *City*, and bombastic *Barb*.

BY ED FLIXMAN

THE TRADITIONALLY SLOW POST-CHRISTMAS SEASON will be brightened considerably this year, with the general release of two of the more artful SF-fantasy films of 1995. Terry Gilliam's *Twelve Monkeys*, covered in our last issue, shouldn't be too hard to find at your local cineplex; you may have to search a bit more to find a local theater showing *The City of Lost Children*, a French production by Marc Caro and Jean-Pierre

Jeunet, the writing-directing team behind the cult hit *Delicatessen*.

City is set in a nightmarish harbor town plagued by a series of child kidnappings perpetrated by Krank, an evil genius who is aging rapidly due to his inability to dream.



Judith Vittet (as Miette, left, with head turned) and Ron Perlman (as carnival strongman, One, right, with head turned) join forces against an evil genius in *City of the Lost Children*.

When a carnival strongman named One (Ron Perlman) loses his adopted brother to Krank's Cyclopean henchmen, he sets out on a rescue mission; along the way, he meets Miette (Judith Vittet), a strong-willed orphan whose resourcefulness, allied with One's strength, is the only hope to end Krank's reign of terror.

Despite the fairy tale nature of the story, *City of Lost Children* is clearly meant for an adult audience, while children bright enough to endure a subtitled film will find much to enjoy as well. Both the look and the tone of the film will remind many of Terry Gilliam's films *Time*

Bandits and *Brazil*, though *City's* internal logic, and the richness of its visual design, seem more related to the world of dreams than to any filmic precedent. The filmmakers' use of digital effects results in some remarkably lyrical sequences, including a close-up view of "murder by flea," the midnight voyage of a nightmare, and a life rescued by a single teardrop.

"In every way, in this film, our vision of dreams is not at all realistic," says Caro. "We've read all the books about dreams, their significance, etc.; but, while it was thoroughly interesting, it wasn't necessary to take it into consideration for the story that we wanted to tell. One takes a greater risk in the realm of fairy tales than in dreams, in the proper sense. So we went in that direction, letting our imagination manifest itself."

At the other end of the spectrum, Polygram's SF epic *Barb Wire* seems tailor-made for fans looking for a contemporary counterpart to such bygone action heroes as Honey West and Modesty Blaze. Starring Pamela Anderson and based upon the comic book created by Dark Horse Comics president Mike Richardson, the story takes place in the midst of the United States' second civil war, as the Congressional Army completes its conquest of the East and begins cutting a bloody swath toward the West Coast.

In the neutral town of Steel Harbor, Barbara Kopetski, a.k.a. Barb Wire (Anderson), is the tough-as-nails proprietress of the Hammerhead Bar. A former freedom fighter who's given up the cause to care for her blind younger brother, Barb must tend to unfinished business when her brother is murdered by the Congressionals. Co-starring with Anderson is Temuera Morrison (last seen as "The Muss" in *Once Were Heroes*) as her rebel leader-lover Axel Hood; the film marks the directorial debut of David Hogan, who, as second unit director, was responsible for many of the action sequences in *Batman Forever* and *Aliens II*. Polygram's recently revived film division expects to release the film this April.

Miramax Films' new Dimension division, which debuted with the release of *Dusk Till Dawn*, is gearing up to dominate the field of low-to-medium budget horror and sci-fi. Among the projects on their ambitious roster: *Imposter*, from a Philip K. Dick story, is to be directed by Scot Rosenberg, screenwriter of *Things to Do in Denver When You're Dead*; *Mimic*, a nature-out-of-balance tale à la Hitchcock's *The Birds*, is being developed by Guillermo



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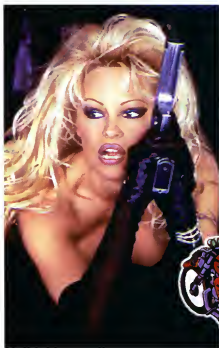
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del Toro, writer-director of *Cronos*; Joe Chappelle (*Halloween VI*) will direct *Phantoms*, from the Dean Koontz novel; Gregory Widen—screenwriter of the original *Highlander* and director of the recent mythical thriller *The Prophecy*—is working on the script for a new film in the *Highlander* series, which he will also direct; and Wes Craven will remake *The Haunting*, Robert Wise's 1962 classic based on Shirley Jackson's novel *The Haunting of Hill House*. Other talents on tap for the division include Drew Barrymore, who will star in *Scary Movie*; Clive Barker, who has several of his short stories under consideration as possible "franchise" properties; and Quentin Tarantino, for an undisclosed project. Dimension's next release will be *The Crow: City of Angels*, expected to open this July 4th weekend.

Now that *Fugitive* and *Waterworld* writer David Twohy has begun principal photography on his alien contact thriller *Shockwave*, some of the plot details are beginning to emerge. Charlie Sheen plays Zane Ziminski, a scientist in NASA's Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence program (SETI), whose recording of a radio transmission from deep space makes him the target of a secret government agency—and what may be the advance guard of an alien invasion, headquartered in an underground base in the hills of Mexico. Twohy's script is inspired by actual UFO conspiracy lore and should therefore be of high interest for both *X-Files*



Pamela Anderson stars in the film *Barb Wire* based on the *Dark Horse* comic book.

fans and *Alien Autopsy* buffs. Three other alien invasion movies are also currently shooting: Tim Burton's *Mars Attacks*, Robert Carradine's *Area 51*, and, for Dreamworks SKG, Barry Sonnenfeld's *Men in Black: Independence Day*, Fox's \$60 million invasion

thriller from *StarGate* director Roland Emmerich, has completed principal photography and is currently being put in shape for a July 4th weekend debut.

Douglas Trumbull's Imax Films, specializing in giant-screen entertainment, has announced major expansion plans, including five new theaters to be built in major cities that currently have no Imax outlets. Also in the works is a collaboration with Twentieth Century Fox on a feature film that will utilize both Imax technology and conventional film formats.

New York Times foreign correspondent John

Darnton hasn't yet finished his novel *Namderthals*, about the discovery of a living tribe of the prehistoric bipeds in an out-of-the-way corner of Central Europe; but, already, Dreamworks SKG has purchased the book as a potential Spielberg project.

Paul Verhoeven is recovering from the traumatic experience of *Showgirls*' disastrous box office performance by burying himself in preproduction details on *Starship Troopers*, adapted from Robert Heinlein's classic novel of interplanetary war. The project reunites Verhoeven with screenwriter Ed Neumeier and producer Jon Davidson, who last worked with him on *Robocop*. The TriStar-Disney co-production, scheduled to start



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shooting this spring for possible 1997 release, will be distributed domestically by TriStar and internationally by Disney.

Three different studios have big-budget volcano movies on the boil; Fox 2000's *Volcano* is a disaster movie that examines the repercussions of unexpected volcanic activity in the middle of Los Angeles; Universal's *Dante's Peak* is an action-adventure scenario under development as a possible vehicle for Sylvester Stallone; and *Ring of Fire* is under development at Touchstone for director Tony Scott. None are expected to reach theater screens before 1997.

Effects men move up: Ken Ralston, after many years as one of the chief visual effects talents at Lucasfilm, has been lured away to head Sony Pictures Imageworks, the digital effects arm of Columbia-Tristar. Part of the package places Ralston as director of the FX epic *Dinotopia*. And John Bruno, visual effects director of *True Lies* and several other blockbusters, is slated to direct *Virius*, a sci-fi horror film adapted from Chuck Pfarrer's *Dark Horse* comic book.

John Cameron, in the meantime, is no longer waiting for the legal mess over *Spiderman* film rights to be clarified. He's currently in the middle of preproduction on *Titanic*, which will start shooting in March. Cameron's script develops along two different timelines, alternating scenes between the doomed ship's maiden voyage, and contemporary efforts to salvage the ship's historical



Bela Lugosi's 9,000-square-foot mansion, known to Sunset Strip-area residents as "The Castle," has been purchased for \$2.3 million by Johnny Depp—who played Lugosi's close pal (and title character) in Tim Burton's *Ed Wood*. Above, Depp with Martin Landau as Lugosi from the film.

contents. Steve Buscemi (*Reservoir Dogs*) co-stars with Kurt Russell in John Carpenter's *Escape From L.A.*, now shooting in (where else?) Los Angeles.

George Cosmatos (*Leviathan*, *First Blood Part II*) has been signed to direct a new *Tarzan* film for Fox; in keeping with the studio's wishes, Cosmatos will take the Lord of the Apes back to the action-adventure genre, as typified by ape-man's earliest films and Edgar Rice Bur-

rough's series of pulp novels. "I grew up with those films," says Cosmatos, "and always wanted to do stuff in the *Raiders of the Lost Ark* vein, without taking it too seriously."

Ted Turner's mega-conglomerate may be the next studio to enter the animated feature business; talks are underway for Turner to make a major investment in Colossal Pictures, producers of MTV's *Aeon Flux*, and the animated sequences in the feature films *Tank Girl* and *Natural Born Killers*. Colossal's first feature project would be *The Flying Dutchman*, the story of a cursed sea captain whose entire crew has been transformed into animals. Opera lovers won't welcome this news: Elton John and Tim Rice are writing the music and lyrics for a Disney-animated version of *Aida*. What's wrong with Verdi?

ABC has been the traditional home for Stephen King miniseries, but this year's *Jack*, scripted by King and based upon characters in his novel *The Shining*, is being produced by Warner Brothers. WB is expected to make a cozy deal for the King property with one of the major networks. Meanwhile, Warner animation has pulled its shows from the Fox Kids schedule to bolster its own sagging WB network schedule.

Savoy Film's current financial problems have eliminated its production slate, to the great consternation of John Landis, who bypassed several projects in order to concentrate on Savoy's *The Stupids*, to star Tom Arnold. "It was originally supposed to



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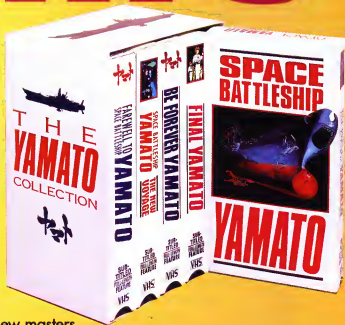
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release for Christmas, 1995," Landis laments. "It's frustrating.... I'm more excited about *The Stupids* than anything I've done in years."

Scripts for series seven of *Red Dwarf* are said to be ready, and the popular BBC-2 show will be going back into production for eight episodes this spring, with U.K. broadcast penciled in for January, 1997. Craig Charles, who was recently acquitted on charges that he sexually assaulted a former girlfriend, will return as Lister, with the rest of the series 6 regulars. An eighth series is also in the works.

ABC has made an early announcement of *Aliens in the Family*, a new series for the 1996 fall television season. Produced by Jim Henson productions, the show will make liberal use of animatronics to tell the story of a *Brady Bunch*-type marriage between single parents—except one of them is from outer space. Tobe Hooper, meanwhile, has signed with Disney's television division to develop series, miniseries, and TV movie ideas.

Nowhere Man's creator and executive producer, Larry Hertzog, has been an active participant in the Usenet newsgroup dedicated to that show, alt.tv.nowhere-man. In late October, he announced UPN's request for an additional nine episodes (guaranteeing a full twenty-two-episode first season). However, according to Hertzog, UPN has mandated a change of direction for the show; starting with episodes broadcasting



Disney's Pixar Studio is gearing up for a possible computer-animated TV series based on Toy Story.

in January, the show will be less "Prisonersque," and focus more on the particulars of the conspiracy against Thomas Veil. Also on the Internet, a rumor that Fox Television's Movie-of-the-Week division was planning a VR-5 telefilm was recently in circulation. The rumor proved to be untrue, but the fan interest roused by the rumor was sufficient for Fox and Rysher Entertainment, which produced the series, to open discussions of just such a possibility. *Sliders* is ten-

tatively penciled in to return to Fox on January 21. Around the same time, Acclaim/Armada Comics will publish two issues of a *Sliders* comic, using characters and concepts from the slightly revamped series. *Star Trek* fans might want to keep a sharp eye out for the *Babylon-5* episode "Point of No Return," expected to air in January or early February; Majel Barrett Rodenberry will guest star as the wife of a Centauri Emperor. □

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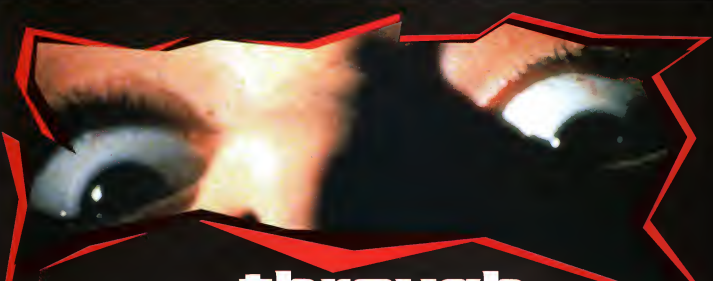
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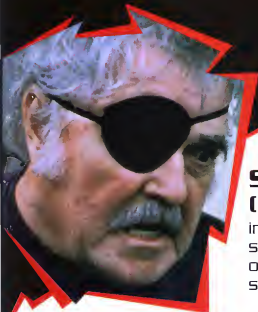
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RETAILER: DISPLAY UNTIL FEBRUARY 28

CD-ROMs and on-line sites will replace shelves of books.

BY MELISSA J. PERENSON

ANTIGRAVITY GENERATOR, EJ7 INTERLOCK, data crystal...with the proliferation of such techno-babble, it's no wonder that science fiction has spawned a small industry of reference work publishing. If there's one thing science fiction aficionados share, it's an insatiable curiosity. A curiosity that tends to foster creativity, imagination, and a certain open-minded, open-ended vision of the future—or, at the

very least, a willingness to envision the future. Along with that comes a desire to be immersed in fictional universes alien from our own. One thing is for sure: SF fans are passionate about their chosen favorites, and insatiable for information about them, whether the morsel of information is as obscure as defining an EJ7 interlock

ing the references of first resort for SF fans worldwide. Whether your interest is scholarly essays analyzing SF literature or a detailed background and behind-the-scenes peek at *StarGate*, plot synopses of unproduced episodes of *Max Headroom*, or a compendium of terms explaining the world of *Babylon 5*, chances are you'll find a collection out there to suit your needs.

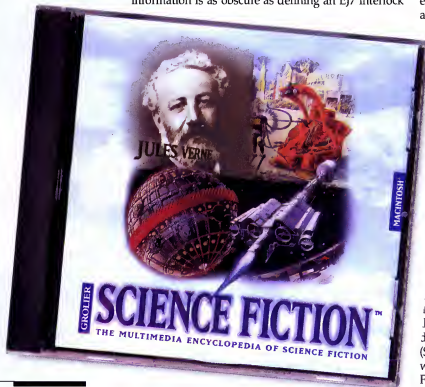
The advantages of CD-ROM and on-line guides over the traditional paperback are many. Not only can you pack a tremendous amount of information into one place, but you can also provide an easy means of navigating through that information. Plus, you can take advantage of new technologies that are increasingly bringing reality closer to fiction.

The most ambitious product that falls under this broad category is Simon & Schuster's *Star Trek Omnimedia*. Based on the popular books *The Star Trek Chronology*, by Michael Okuda and Denise Okuda, and *The Star Trek Encyclopedia*, by Michael Okuda, Denise Okuda, and Debbie Mirek, the *Omnimedia* is an inspiring example of a CD-ROM with powerful content. The depth and presentation of the information on his disk is simply amazing. If it has to do with *Trek*—no matter how minute a detail or obscure a definition or trivial a character—you'll find it here.

Together with a free updated CD, the *Omnimedia* covers all generations of the *Star Trek* universe through the 1994-1995 season. There are 6,000 indexed entries, more than 2,000 photos and illustrations, and more than 100 digitized film clips and animated collages. Mark Lenard (Sarek of Vulcan) narrates five key historical overviews, while Majel Barrett Roddenberry assumes her familiar Federation computer system voice throughout. The *Omnimedia*'s sleek interface is modeled after the consoles found on the starship *Enterprise 1701-D*. The search engine lets you conveniently search alphabetically

through the encyclopedia, or search by episode, by topic, by media, or by chronology. All entries are meticulously cross-referenced and linked via hypertext (highlighted text that links to related material).

One of the truly unique things about the *Omnimedia* is that it's the first consumer product to incorporate voice recognition technology.



Grolier's Multimedia Encyclopedia of Science Fiction features over 4,500 entries, hundreds of illustrations, movie clips and exciting interactive features.

(which, by the way, is an engineering tool for opening "critical system access panels" on *Deep Space 9*), or as the basic premise behind *Babylon 5*.

But, just as new technologies have left your trusty old *World Book Encyclopedia* to collect dust on your shelf, so too has it transformed the way fans can retrieve information about their favorite genre. Multimedia CD-ROMs and the ever-growing world of on-line are quickly becoming



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Voice recognition brings the database even closer to the Federation computers depicted in the series; if your PC or Macintosh computer is equipped with a microphone, you can use voice commands to activate database searches.

Simon & Schuster's development plans for the *Star Trek* franchise on CD-ROM stretch well into 1996. If you love the race all Trekkers love to hate (with a few notable exceptions, of course), then you'll love *Star Trek Klingon*. The CD-ROM, due in March, will include an immersion course in Klingon language, culture, politics, and lore. You'll be able to brush up on your Klingon with Power Klingon, an interactive conversational Klingon language teacher.

Also due by mid-1996 are separate CD-ROM episode guides for the original *Star Trek* and *Star Trek: The Next Generation*. In addition to detailed episode and cast guides, the discs will feature digitized movie clips, sound bites, and stills from each episode of both series.

If you need a science fiction resource that covers all aspects of the genre, *Grolier's Multimedia Encyclopedia of Science Fiction* is outstanding. This stunning effort is based on the Hugo Award-winning book, revised and expanded for the CD-ROM edition by the original reference title's editors, John Clute and Peter Nicholls. There are more than 4,500 entries that leave no aspect of science fiction unturned. Not surprisingly, the *Encyclopedia* is particularly strong on the literary side; there are more than 321 author portraits and 1,700 book and magazine illustrations. The powerful search engine lets you search across the themed sections: Archives, Book Browser, Time Machine, Gallery, and Themes. And, coupled with an elegantly streamlined interface that's easy to navigate, it's a pleasure browsing through this reference work, discovering the new and rediscovering the familiar. The unique "Themes" section includes movie clips providing background on various topics in science fiction and fact; many of the clips feature such acclaimed SF writers as Andre Norton and William Gibson providing insight and perspective on the

elements of SF, and on the life of a science fiction author. SF film and television is amply represented with detailed summations, through recent film and television, though media fans will be disappointed by the absence of film or sound clips from recent SF film and television favorites.

New media is not necessarily better media. This is especially the case where *Science Fiction: The Gold Collection* is concerned. Several well-respected science fiction "names" were involved in this project, but we will extend all of them anonymity and absolution. After all, most

of these gentlemen are old guard bookmen, with printer's ink in their veins, who only consented to be filmed for this compendium as they held forth on the topic of science fiction. The meat of this CD-ROM is a collection of books, science fiction classics which by dint of age or negligence have fallen into the public domain (so, no need to trouble with reprint fees or author royalties). The design, however, is an insane triumph of form over content.

Suppose you wish to refer to H.G. Wells' description of the Morlocks in *The Time Machine*. If you own both volumes of *The Gold Collection*, you must first remember that four Wells novels are among the twelve books contained on Volume One. While launching the disk (which takes an unusually long time, considering its narrow capabilities), you must click past the introductory videos which arise every time you launch it. Then you must "travel" through the various rooms of the ship until you have located the room that contains the volume you seek.

The reproduction of the cover, though, is very tiny—be careful you don't click on *War of the Worlds* by mistake! Be extra careful, because there will be interminable waiting as the program always first loads an image of the book's jacket. Now, with a good look at the jacket, you know you've got the right book—so wait some more while the program calls a subprogram to play the introductory video. When the video comes up, click past it, then wait while the book loads (and, judging by the length of the wait, another subprogram to read the book).

Once you have the book open, you discover that there is no way to search the book's poorly proofread pages. So you must search page by page. But the pages don't exactly flip with computer speed, they dramatically dissolve into one another, with a snazzy sound effect. And printing it out is a poor alternative, as the inflexible printing function will only print in a blocky typeface optimized for on-screen reading, and won't allow you to reformat the text to fit a normal page size, resulting in much wasted paper.

Continued on page 27

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INFINITE CHANNELS

Continued from page 22

In sum, this seems truly a success of the post-literate age: a science fiction "library" for people who don't like books.

Excuse me if I flee from this new media nightmare to the comforts of the World Wide Web. The Web may be a lot slower, but it similarly uses hypertext links to knit related information together—only on the Web, instead of traversing a few centimeters of coated plastic, a hypertext link can jump across oceans and around the world. Practically since its inception, the Web has been host to home pages dedicated to SF and fantasy media. In the last year, SF Websites have experienced explosive growth, as the professionals have entered the arena with "Official" Websites disseminating pictures, clips, sounds, and information, all provided and maintained by the originating studios.

Trek, of course, has "boldly gone" to the Web; in addition to countless fan-administered pages, Paramount has a classy *Voyager* site at <http://www.paramount.com> that provides a guide to episodes aired, the opportunity to learn more about the starship *Voyager*, digitized movie clips of upcoming episodes, and cast and character information.

Twentieth Century Fox Home Entertainment has assembled a most comprehensive, impressive, and highly interactive Website

devoted to the *Star Wars* trilogy at <http://www.cfhe.com>. Originally created to tout the release of the THX-enhanced video re-release, the site has quickly grown into the definitive, official home of *Star Wars* on the Web. Developed with the cooperation of LucasFilm, the site is intuitively arranged, and easy to navigate; and it's quickly evident that particular care has been lavished on eye-catching graphics that serve more than just an aesthetic purpose.

There are separate areas of the site for *Star Wars*, *The Empire Strikes Back*, and *Return of the Jedi*; each section includes full character and actor biographies, a selection of digitized film clips that together with textual summaries helps tell the story of *Star Wars*, props, publicity stills, and pre-production sketches. Character biographies are culled from Del Rey Books' *A Guide to the Star Wars Universe*, by Bill Slavicsek. "We tried to use this site as the official home for *Star Wars*," explains Ruby Randall, a marketing vice president for Twentieth Century Fox Home Entertainment. Although the site's status is uncertain beyond the video's off-sale date in January, Randall believes the site will persevere in some form, either at its current location or perhaps as a part of LucasFilm's planned Website.

The truth is out there, and you can find it at X-Files' official on-line home at a Website maintained by the Delphi on-line service at <http://www.delphi.com>. A sleek, graphics-intensive effort, the site is constructed simi-

larly to the *Star Wars* and *Voyager* sites. The site was recently upgraded to be more comprehensive, including complete cast and production information, updates on upcoming episodes, merchandising and convention information, and an episode guide with movie clips, sound clips, and downloadable stills. There are also numerous interactive bulletin boards and contests, and related discussions regarding paranormal experiences.

This round-up would be severely remiss if it didn't mention the vast wealth of *Babylon 5* material available on-line. Although the long-rumored *Babylon* CD-ROM has yet to surface, Warner Bros. Domestic Entertainment has established a ground-breaking site for *Babylon 5* on America Online. The site, at keyword "Babylon 5," is the best SF effort to date on any commercial on-line service. (Of course, B-5's competition at Paramount will try to change that when they bring their *Star Trek* area on-line on The Microsoft Network, later in 1996.) There are plenty of downloadable audio, video, and image files, an official FAQ that provides answers to everyone's most frequently asked questions about *Babylon 5*, abundant detail about the cast and production team, and the opportunity to communicate with fellow B-5 fans on the chatboards. If you need more *Babylon 5*, then venture back out to the Web, and to the unofficial, but very authoritative and splendidly organized *Lurker's Guide to Babylon 5* at <http://www.hyperion.com/lurk/lurker.htm>

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ml. Though it's a fan effort, it's expertly put together, and enjoys the blessing of *B-5's* creator, Joseph Michael Straczynski, whose commentaries on each episode make fascinating reading.

For a definitive Internet gateway to the science fiction cyber-universe, check out *The Dominion*, the Sci-Fi Channel's interactive site on the World Wide Web. The Sci-Fi Channel's goal is to have its site "become the ultimate home for science fiction on the Internet," according to Ellen Kaye, vice president of advertising and promotion for USA Networks. *The Dominion* carries complete information on the Sci-Fi Channel and its programming, downloadable science fiction photos, video and audio clips, bulletin boards, and a feedback area where users may communicate with the Sci-Fi Channel and SF fans on the Internet. *The Dominion* also offers information from the wider world of science fiction and provides links to a multitude of other science fiction sites on the Web. *The Dominion* can be found at <http://www.scifi.com>.

Whatever SF information you seek, next generation reference works like the *Multimedia SF Encyclopedia* and the *X-Files Website* are driving home the potential of new media that are yet in infancy; just imagine what their maturity will bring! And think of all the bookshelf space you'll be able to save. □

CHANNEL NEWS

Continued from page 10

Escape from the Planet of the Apes, Conquest of the Planet of the Apes, and Battle for the Planet of the Apes. They air the week of Monday, January 1, at 9 P.M. and 1 A.M.

Also in January, get those New Year's resolutions started right. Work out with Bill Bixby and Lou Ferrigno when Sci-Fi in the U.S. presents an *Incredible Hulk Marathon*, with a full day of episodes of the mean, green fighting machine on Monday, January 15, beginning at 9 A.M. and concluding at 3 A.M.

In February, tune in to *Evolver*, a U.S. Sci-Fi Channel "Planetary Premiere" starring John Delancie. In *Evolver*, a scientist borrows a programming code from a U.S. Department of Defense project to develop the ultimate game-playing robot. But when the once-been robot plays mock war games with a neighborhood teen and his friends, the programming code causes some frightening consequences. This brand-new movie airs Saturday, February 10, at 8 P.M. and 12 A.M.; Sunday, February 11, at 5 P.M.; and throughout February, only on Sci-Fi.

Tell us what you think. You can find Sci-Fi on *The Dominion*, <http://www.scifi.com>.

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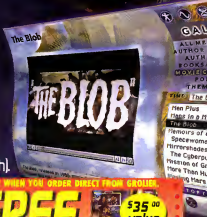
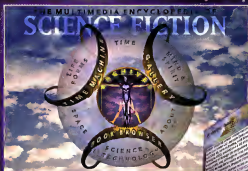
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A video guide to futuristic sports has to include *Rollerball*, *Deathrace 2000*, and *The Blood of Heroes*.

BY STEVEN PUCHALSKI

IT'S SUPER BOWL SEASON, FOLKS. And although it's a common cliché that sports and science fiction fans mix about as well as oil and water, over the years there have been several attempts to mesh the two interests onto celluloid. While films like *The Running Man* have turned survival into a game, the themes become more incendiary when they're taken to the level of team sports since they start to dissect the entire nature of camaraderie,

competition, and fame, while saying larger things about mankind as a whole, as well as the perpetual struggle of "The Individual" against "The System."

The most fondly remembered film of this small, but muscular genre is *Rollerball* (Fox Video), in which we

star of the Houston team. And in between all the standard sports movie subplots—the locker room pep talks, teaching new recruits, the death of a teammate—Jonathan begins to realize that there are drawbacks to this perfect world, because even *he* has to kowtow to the management's whims. First he has to give up his wife, and now, because Jonathan's super-stardom showcases the strength of the individual over the team, he needs to be forcibly retired for the good of the overall game.

Our sympathies are with his plight, since Jonathan is the only halfway likable character in sight. The executives (led by John Houseman) are hateful windbags. The women are interchangeable sex toys (which explains the casting of model-turned-cardboard-actress Maud Adams). The other teammates are muscle-bound jocks. And even the spectators are seen only as slobbering faces, clamoring for bloodshed.

Oddly enough, the film's one major flaw becomes its inadvertent triumph. Because, even though Jewison wants us to be repelled by the *Rollerball* violence, particularly when the rules are changed and the bodies begin stacking up, the sport sequences are so vibrantly captured that you find yourself lost in the Roman spectacle of death and destruction. That becomes particularly evident during the two show-stopping final games, which are cinematic marvels of fire, twisted metal, and choreographed chaos.

Critically slammed during its first release, the movie looks better (not to mention, more believable) with each passing year. And though lacking in subtle social commentary, Jewison sneaks in several choice tidbits, like a trip to a computerized library where the books have been "summarized" for your censored convenience. And if their "futuristic" pastel leisure suits aren't ugly enough, their glass and chrome furnishings make every home and office look like one huge, anti-septic mall. On the down side, the film drags during its midsection by making the mistake of not only capturing the culture's ennui, but inducing it in the viewer too. And even though Caan tried his best to capture Jonathan's inner crisis, you realize he won't be giving DeNiro a run for his money anytime soon.

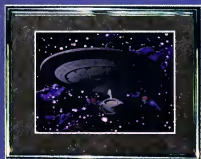
Although *Rollerball* never plumbs the depths it hoped to, this is nevertheless a visceral, hard-as-nails vision that portrays sportsmen as the new gladiators.



Sports teens in the far future enjoy skateball. The cast of *Solarbabies* includes Richard Jordan, Jami Gertz, Jason Patric, Charles Durning, James LeGros, Peter Deluise and Lukas Haas.

enter a world where traditional governments have gone bankrupt and massive corporations have usurped control. In order to keep the population entertained and docile, they've invented the bloodsport of 'rollerball,' which crosses roller derby with the Hell's Angels, pitting two teams against each other on a circular rink, as players skate in football-style, padded uniforms. The goal? To avoid motorcycles and sadistic opponents in hopes of catching a silver metal ball (shot onto the rink from a cannon, no less) and tossing it into a goal. Although it might sound simple on paper, director Norman Jewison and cinematographer Douglas Slocombe turn it into a brutal, kinetic ballet that pulls the viewer right onto the rink.

The hero of the day is Jonathan E. (James Caan), the



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James Caan stars as a Rollerball gladiator in Norman Jewison's sci-fi/sports classic.

It's so good, in fact, that I'm surprised some enterprising '90s sports producer hasn't tried to buy up the copyright on the game and start up a real-life league. The scary thing is nowadays I bet it would be a smash hit.

That same year, science fiction fans were also treated to the joys of *Death Race 2000* (Fox Video), a black sheep cousin to *Rollerball* which embraced many of the same themes, but did so on a Roger Corman-sized budget. Over the years, this has become a well-deserved cult favorite, thanks to some important elements that Caan's film lacked, including a pitch-black sense of humor and sufficient bloodthirsty bad taste to make it transcend its penny-ante limitations.

Directed by Paul Bartel (*Eating Raoul*) and co-scripted by *Little Shop of Horrors* scribe Charles Griffith, the setting is the Trans-Continental Road Race, a competition that has drivers speeding from Manhattan to "New Los Angeles." Of course, what makes the film gruesome fun is the fact that drivers can pick up additional points by running down pedestrians, with higher scores depending upon how disposable they are to society. Meanwhile, a pompous revolutionary force, led by Thomasina Paine, is at work to destroy the Age of Obedience and bring this violent race to an end—even if it means slaughter-

ing all of the racers.

The entire cast has tongue permanently super-glued into their cheek, driving about in what amounts to giant slot cars (with the footage sped up to make it look like they're traveling more than 30 miles per hour) and sporting ridiculous costumes that turn the event into pro-wrestling on four wheels. Taking a respite from his *Kung Fu* TV series, David Carradine stars as Frankenstein, the world's pre-eminent Death Race driver. And while other actors might have balked at spending an entire movie in a head-to-toe leather body suit, Carradine excels as the laconic loner. There's also Mary Woronov as Calamity Jane, *The Karate Kid*'s Martin Kove as a Roman hunk named Nero, plus a Nazi blond bombshell named Matilda the Hun and her assistant, Herman the German, played by *The Love Boat*'s Gopher, Fred Grandy. But best of all is a pre-*Rocky* Sylvester Stallone as Frankenstein's archenemy, Machine Gun Joe. Wearing gangster threads and a hot pink tie, Sly gets to show off a

self-deprecating sense of humor that's rarely evident in his current-day fare.

Death Race is pure, drive-in exploitation, full of gratuitous bloodshed and nudity. But Bartel's screwball sensibilities also turn it into a comic fable with a surprising amount of subversive politics. Everyone is a target here. Not just the government, but also the racers, the rebels, the media, and most importantly, the far-too-loyal fans, who go so far as to throw themselves under the wheels of Frankenstein's car as their ultimate tribute to him. Photographed by the great Tak Fujimoto, this is a wonderfully off-the-wall slice of sci-fi derangement. And under all its cheap gags it displays a surer sense of cultural violence than *Rollerball* could ever hope for. More importantly, after only one viewing, you'll never look at slowpoke pedestrians the same way again.

The Blood of Heroes (HBO Home Video) takes the concept of futuristic team competition to a totally different time and place. Because instead of technological excess and dehumanization, we find ourselves in *Road Warrior* territory, where civilization lies in ruins and humanity is getting a tad frayed around the edges. And instead of using sport as a simple competition, it has now become a means for survival.

Filmed in Australia under the less generic title of *Salute of the Jugger*, Rutger Hauer

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stars as Sallow, the leader of a pack of nomadic "juggers"—who travel from village to village, across the desert on foot, challenging local teams. With makeshift uniforms and pads, a "ball" made from a dog's skull, and armed with clubs and chains, the point of the game is to beat your opponents senseless, while struggling to ram the dog's skull onto a spike.

Sallow's team might not be much to look at, but the moment they walk onto that dusty chunk of playing field, they're the finest—decimating the other teams, and celebrating their wins afterward by stitching up each other's gaping wounds and rifling the town for sex and liquor. After several two-bit games, this rag-tag team heads to the remains of the city, in order to get a shot at challenging the professional gladiators of "The League," who slave and sweat for the few remaining despots, even as Hauer must confront ghosts from his past.

Though the script is awash with clichés, the cast of players throw themselves into their gritty, physical roles, including Vincent D'Onofrio (*Full Metal Jacket*) and Delroy Lindo (*Clockers*). But the show belongs to Hauer, who certainly merits the award for most abused action star, as his character is covered in scars and scabs, seems to get his haircuts from the local butcher, and spends half the movie missing an eye. And even though it's obvious writer-director David Peoples (best known for scripting *Blade Runner*, Clint Eastwood's *Unforgiven*, and the recent *Twelve Monkeys*) is cribbing from the *Mad Max* trilogy, what makes the movie truly memorable is its avoidance of conventional Hollywood niceties. This is a grim, arid tale, and nothing cracks its hardened shell. The landscape is brutal and demanding; the actors are sunburnt, unwashed, and covered in fresh wounds; and everybody in the cast gets the crap beaten out of them at one time or another.

The game itself is a vicious animalistic combat—more like a gang rumble than a team sport—especially when you're witness to such juicy tidbits as the usually demure Joan Chen biting off an opponent's ear during a game. Of course, if you wash away all the blood and dirt, you'll notice that the story is a standard "David and Goliath" tale, pitting the Little Guys against The League—but damned if it doesn't work in its own grubby fashion. And although never embraced by the general public (in large part due to its casual brutality and relentlessly downbeat tone), this is a beautifully filthy realization of a future where none of us could survive through a slow weekend.

Moving from the brutal to the ridiculous, we end with *Solarbabies* (MGM/UA Home Video), a big-budget yarn which takes many of the same themes of teamwork and the triumph of the underdog,

then cobbles them together into a half-baked goulash of teen clichés. Oddly enough, it was produced by Mel Brooks' Brookslim, and although it's obvious they didn't intend to make a comedy, the finished product contains more sci-fi-induced laughs than Brooks' own *Spaceballs*.

Set long after the devastating Eco-Wars, the teenagers of the rain-barren future reside in desert orphanages. Despite their prisonlike surroundings, these post-apocalyptic kids attempt to maintain their individuality by sneaking out after dark and playing skateball with other teams. Admittedly, it's not a very complex game, but at least it gives our heroes a chance to slip on roller skates, grab makeshift lacrosse sticks, and roll around a circular junkyard rink while tossing a ball into a center goal. But unlike Hauer's *Heroes*, these sportsmen (and women) wear trendy, griffitted outfits; call themselves (the thoroughly unthreatening) *Solarbabies*; and look like extras from a 21st century remake of *Roller Boogie*.

When they're not playing Skateball, there's a subplot about little Lukas Haas (*Witness*) discovering a mystical, glowing sphere that heals the deaf, creates indoor rainstorms, and slows the plot to a saccharine crawl. The middle section drops its sports motif to become a simplistic "Teen Rebels vs. Stodgy Adult Fascists," with the *Solarbabies* escaping from their orphanage and waging war against the gestapolike police force.

If not for its large cast of rising young stars, this film might have ended up buried and quickly forgotten. And I'm sure that prospect would have been unanimously approved by the leads, including Jason Patric, Jami Gertz, James LeGros, and future *21 Jump Street* lunk Peter DeLuise, all of whom struggle in vain to keep their dignity intact and rarely mention this fiasco when speaking of their early careers.

All in all, this is just another in a long line of misguided Hollywood sci-fiascos, cannibalizing past successes without one iota of wit or originality. Once again, the future is presented as a big, plastic playground, and conveniently enough, all the roads and underground tunnels happen to have perfectly flat floors—making it easy for our *Solarbabies* to skate at high speed without breaking their necks.

It's obvious that a good deal of time and money was spent on piecing together entire cities out of scrap metal, but the effort is wasted when the final product lacks any real-life grit. It's big, it's lavish, and it all feels like a synthetic Disney World ride, right down to the villains' 'pleather' suits and the laughably flimsy police vehicles. Worst of all, it makes you wonder how filmmakers with such an obvious ignorance of science fiction are repeatedly given the green light (not to mention, a barrel full of cash) to make science fiction films. □

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Dan O'Bannon's script for *Screamers*, based on a short story by Philip K. Dick, takes place on a distant mining colony where robots learn to rebuild themselves with deadly sophistication.

SF'S PRAGMATIC



Few offer a more realistic view of Hollywood than the screenwriter behind Alien, Total Recall and the current Screamers.

THE LAST TIME I SPOKE WITH Dan O'Bannon, *Alien* was about to release; Twentieth Century Fox had set us up for *Starlog's* first cover story on the film. While the resulting coverage certainly made *Alien* sound all the more intriguing, it was also disturbing, as the portrait of O'Bannon that emerged from the piece was that of an earnest young man, with an artist's regard for the writing craft, traumatized by the rape of his script by the film's producers. When Fox received their advance copy of the issue, I was quickly placed on the phone with *Alien* producer Walter Hill for a follow-up piece and a bit of "damage control."

Dan O'Bannon: VISIONARY



While O'Bannon credits Ridley Scott for his work on *Alien*, he also contends that the SF film he intended was never made. Since *Alien*, O'Bannon feels, too often his screenplays have been bought by those who sought the value of his name, rather than his writing ability.

Perhaps I just haven't been paying attention, but I've seen very few O'Bannon interviews since, though he's added about a dozen genre credits, including some very high-profile hits, to his filmography in the intervening years. O'Bannon, who has suffered from misrepresentations in at least one SF media magazine, seems to be a bit press-shy, and few magazines in the genre avidly pursue subjects whose blunt, honest answers can threaten prized relationships with studios, producers and filmmakers.

So I was a little surprised when the press representative for *Screamers* wanted to set me up with Dan O'Bannon. People at Tri-Star were extraordinarily excited with the news that O'Bannon, notoriously hard to please, liked the film.

Three different people told me in the same words: "He says that it's better than *Total Recall*."

Well, duh. *Total Recall* is exactly the kind of film that, given what I knew of the man, O'Bannon would hate. Not that it's a bad film, but as an adaptation of Philip K. Dick's *We Can Remember It For You Wholesale*, it sucks.

The experience of talking to O'Bannon for a second time was, in a word, inspirational. Remarkably well-read, possessed of an intellect that is probably intimidating to many Hollywood types, O'Bannon frequently veered off on tangents not directly related to SF or movies, from particle physics to esoteric Islamic philosophy, tangents that, for space considerations, are omitted here. He has lost not a bit of his honesty, or his



serious regard for his own work. But he has picked up a great deal of toughness, and he's learned enough about "the game" to play it to the extent that he needs to.

O'Bannon is currently scripting a pilot for ABC entitled *Gargoyles* (no relation to the Disney series), he's developing a Marvel Comics character for Warner's animation unit, and recently completed a treatment on the exploits of his ancestor "Presley O'Bannon, who kicked the ass of the Barbary Pirates, thus transforming the Marine Corps from a shore patrol on-board cops unit to the elite fighting force of the American military."

Sci-Fi Entertainment: How did you get involved with *Screamers*?

Dan O'Bannon: A young guy named

Daniel Gilbertson, who was trying to make himself into a producer, came to me; he had gotten together with Holly Palance, and convinced her to buy the rights to the Phil Dick story "Second Variety." He wanted to know if I'd like to write it. And I said yeah, I'd like to—a terrific story.

I'd known that story all my life. You've always got an advantage with a story that you've read in childhood, because when you grow up and become a writer and it comes time to adapt the thing, you know what's right and wrong, in a way you can never know about a story you've read recently. It's become a part of your psyche.

We made a contract, and they didn't have enough money to pay me. I told my agent, I'd like to do this anyway. We made a deal whereby if they didn't get the picture made in a timely fashion, the thing reverted to my ownership; I got the film rights to the Phil Dick story, and ownership of the script. They didn't get it made, and one day my agent calls me and says, 'The script is yours.'

SFE: Then you sold it to Charles Fries?

O'Bannon: Right. They didn't know what to call the script. "Second Variety" is a little dry, like calling it "Loaf of Bread." I'm trying to figure out what to call the damn thing. And, as I'm writing my way into it, I noticed that these machines in the script don't have any name, they're just a deadly thing. I thought

well, this is a clandestine anti-personnel weapon. Then I think, that acronyms as CLAW, doesn't it? So I jot that down on the script, meanwhile knowing that it is totally inappropriate for the title, it sounds like an Italian horror movie. Then I thought of the title *Dragon's Teeth*. Well Charlie Fries, who bought the script from me, saw CLAWS written on the script, and he just fell in love with that title.

SFE: Tri-Star is thrilled that you liked *Screamers* better than *Total Recall*.

O'Bannon: The picture is extremely well-directed, and, from my own selfish perspective, Christian did something that is usually not done with my screenplays; he followed every beat of the action and plot as it developed, almost exactly as I'd written it, which is, in my semi-humble view, one of the reasons it plays rather well. And if circumstances permit, I look forward to working with him again.

On *Total Recall*, I had done an exceptionally careful job of orchestrating the way the plot developed all the way through. Then a very casual attitude was taken toward that plot development. In the final film, there's still a very strong underlying plot through the first two-thirds of the film, which carries it. Then it collapses into chaos.

But Christian shot pretty much exactly what I'd written. In terms of staying in your seat 'til the end, and attending carefully to

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ABOVE, While *Total Recall* preserved much of the identity-play and the humor of Philip Dick's story, the need to follow action-film convention ultimately obscured its themes.

OPPOSITE, Though *Return of the Living Dead* remains a favorite with critics and fans O'Bannon finds little to praise in his directorial debut.

the film, this does play better. *Total Recall* has the advantage of being humorous and light-hearted; this is very grim, nail-biting stuff, but that's inherent with the material.

One of the reasons I was personally reluctant to direct it myself is that it is so grim. By the time I got through doing the script, I was fairly depressed, and I wasn't looking forward to staging this scene of mass devastation.

SFE: When I spoke with him, Christian cited Sartre's novel *Death of the Soul*, indicating that this was a piece of some serious intent.

O'Bannon: I don't know if I've ever tried in my lifetime to write a screenplay of serious intent. What I have done is, I've tried with serious intent to make lively and amusing entertainment.

In general, I wouldn't advise filmmakers to try to transfer any lofty intellectual concepts from your reading into film, unless perhaps it's the study of the psychology of emo-

tions. You're much better off drawing inspiration from pulp and popular literature.

SFE: Philip Dick also seemed to be saying that the story was important, when he wrote that "*Second Variety*" represented the full realization of his theme, "what does it mean to be human."

O'Bannon: Dick's definition of human had to do with kindness and decency. His stories are full of people who are miserable bastards, and aliens or robots who have moral qualities that might entitle them to be considered human. The Sufis hold that people are not born human, but are capable of becoming human through moral diligence.

Screamers would be a full realization of that theme, for instance, if some of these screamers had advanced to that stage of "humanness."

SFE: There is a tendency among some Dick fans—I may be guilty of this—to give added weight to his work, because of his madness.

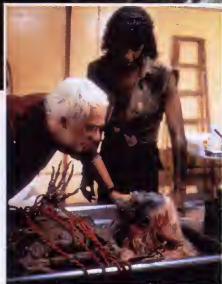
O'Bannon: The thing about Dick that was unusual was not that he was psychotic; it was in the fact that he was simultaneously psychotic and a creative genius. Therefore, he was able to turn his morbid delusions into brilliant fiction that entertained us all.

The first part of Dick's life was spent writing sci-fi for fun and for money. It was his career, his job. Then he had a crossing of the Rubicon, when he experienced the pink light coming out of his radio. To him this was a metaphysical revelation, as opposed to the codeine and toothache-induced hallucination that it, in fact, was. He spent the latter years of his life completely absorbed in his *Exegesis* [a work of over 10,000 pages, a portion of which has been published], determined to gouge out the meaning of his mystical experience. He believed he had achieved a pipeline to capital-T Truth, and he was going to figure it out come hell or high water, because it was important.

Everything he did in that regard was written with a leaden sincerity; nothing that he wrote after that was entirely untainted by it. Up through his novel *Ubik*, he took a light-hearted approach, and in the latter part of his career he wrote a handful of short stories that still sparkled, but the later novels were all attempts to carry forward his "exegesis."

SFE: I'm surprised you haven't directed more films yourself; *Return of the Living Dead* was, in its way, a perfect little film.

O'Bannon: It's very nice of you to say that, but to me it was very far from perfect. It was an idea that did not need to be made. It wasn't a great hit, and the reason for that is the core notion of the thing was not particularly gripping. The things that I get excited about are ideas that, in my opinion, have a pressing need to be on screen, for one reason or another—in most cases, the reason being that everybody will want to see it. This was a case of me taking a job, and working with a very thin notion. That's the main thing I don't like about it, and there are various lesser things I dis-



like about it.

SFE: Still, putting *Return* next to the majority of films made from your screenplays, I'd venture to say that you're a better director than most who have handled your films.

O'Bannon: Having directed two pictures, I'm no longer convinced of my great directorial ability, but on the other hand, I'm not particularly excited about most of the people who have directed my scripts. Seems that a lot of writers in this business have hooked up with some better directors than I have—a writer has no control over that, of course. So I have had the experience of writing stuff, and watching somebody go out with, apparently, a very dim, if any, perception, of all that was on the page. The only true exception, I'd say, was Ridley Scott, and there was another

problem there, which was that Ridley was not permitted by the powers-that-be on *Alien* to film what I wrote.

There are a few spots in *Alien* where my script was left intact, and Ridley fully realized those moments. For the rest of it, he did a splendid interpretation of a very reprehensible bastardization of what I'd written, done by other writers. If he had just been handed my script and shot it, I expect I'd be pleased by the resulting film.

SFE: On *Blue Thunder*, for instance; it seems to me Badham botched it. There was no contrast between man and machine, because the men seemed like machines themselves.

O'Bannon: Once Badham had accepted the assignment to direct *Blue Thunder*, Don Jacobi and I went to his offices to see him; he leaned back in his chair, put his fingertips together, and pontificated, 'I see this as a comic book.' And he proceeded to direct it that way, which vitiated a good deal of the power out of it.

He would take a given scene, and he would try to direct it the wrong way; if a scene was grim, he'd try to make it uplifting; if it was funny, he'd try to make it sad, and if it were scary he'd try to make it funny. What we realized is that he didn't give a damn about the picture. He had picked up a repertoire of four or five cinematic devices that he'd learned in the course of his career that

will make a film look like a slick, professional Hollywood movie, and he uses them, regardless of the picture.

The main thing I learned about directing from John Badham is that you don't have to be intimidated, because it doesn't have to be a hard job. The director doesn't make the picture; everybody else makes the picture. All the director has to do is sit there and do nothing, until it occurs to him that there is something that he does want to do, at which point he speaks up. Then that will be done, at which point he can return to idle for as long as he wants, and the picture will be made by everybody else. If he wants to spend the entire time doing nothing, the picture will be made anyway, and no one will think the worse of him, except perhaps the audience.

On *Return of the Living Dead*, I did the opposite, and tried to micro-manage the whole thing. Everybody on that picture wound up hating my guts.

The second picture I directed [*The Resurrected*, 1992, adapted from Lovecraft's "The Case of Charles Dexter Ward"] was supposed to be called *The Ancestor*, which I felt worked both as a movie title and had the ring of Lovecraft to it. It took me a while to find it. I didn't initiate that project; they brought the thing to me, and they already had a title, *Shatterbrain*. I had a couple of problems with

Continued on page 70

Farhad Mann, director for TV's "cyberpunk" *Max Headroom* series, returns to virtual reality.

Lawnmower Man II: BEYOND CYBERSPACE

BY BERTHE ROEGGER



FILMMAKING IS ONE OF THE MORE COMPLEX AND DIFFICULT human endeavors, particularly for those filmmakers who take pride in the quality of their work. The task of making a film sequel encompasses all the same problems and automatically adds several extra headaches. Sequel makers must somehow find a way to be both repetitive and original, as the most successful film sequels—from *The Godfather Part II* to *Freddy Kreuger Part X*—inevitably repeat the story arc of the original film with sufficient variation to

create for the audience an experience that is both satisfyingly new, and yet of the same breed and texture as the original film.

Those who tune to the Sci-Fi Channel with any regularity have a particular reason to be attentive to the sequel to Brett Leonard's breakthrough film of 1992. In this instance the difficult task described above is in the hands of Farhad Mann, a veteran director whose TV credits include the telefilm *Nick Knight* (which spawned the current USA Network series *Forever Knight*) and the second American pilot for the series *Max Headroom* (currently seen on the Sci-Fi Channel), broadcast as the "Raking" episode. *Lawnmower Man II: Beyond Cyberspace* marks Mann's feature film debut as both screenwriter and director.

Mann is primarily a director of commercials for high-profile clients, from Pepsi to Coke to Bud, and back to MacDonald's; it's not a coincidence that his relatively few television credits include these two projects. "I'm very selective about what I do for television," Mann says. "And if a script isn't something that I particularly want to do, I prefer doing



commercials. Television is a very tough market to break into, and when you do a film for television, you don't get a lot of time—twenty or twenty-one days at most. For *Max Headroom*, a one-hour pilot, we had seven days to shoot. Commercial work is a very good place to learn modern visual techniques, and how to deliver narrative in a constrained situation, where you have to tell your story fast."

New Line's telefilm *Nick Knight*, starring rock idol/soap opera hunk Rick Springfield in the title role, was a "back-door" pilot for a proposed series. "At the time, vampire stuff wasn't as hot," says Mann. "Coppola hadn't done his *Dracula* film, and *X-Files* hadn't happened yet, so it seemed like a very different sort of thing to do for TV, which is why it appealed to me. And it was picked up by a network originally; they ordered six one-hour episodes—then they all of a sudden changed their minds. The producers took the property to Tristar Television, and they took the production to Canada, so I was no longer involved. I only just heard that John Kapelos, who was the only remaining actor from the pilot, has left the series."

Regarding *Max Headroom*, Mann says, "The British show was much more hard-edged, and more seriously cyberpunk.... I would have much preferred to go that way with it. But a lot of elements were deliberately softened because the

network had scheduled it as an 8 o'clock show. Networks can be funny about things like that. For *Nick Knight*, I had conceived a scene in which Nick takes a wine bottle, which is where he stored his blood, and warms it in the microwave.... The network went crazy with that, the idea of the lead character in a series drinking warm blood.

"Whatever I work on, I get very much involved in the development or the revision of the script, but this is the first time I've been credited as screenwriter. When you both write and direct, it guarantees the best possible communication between the writer, the director, and the studio—it helps a lot to know that what I'm writing is what I'm going to shoot. Writing on this one was a really long process.

Matt Frewer stars as diabolical computer genius Jobe. He demonstrates his awesome powers defending his computer-generated empire.



ABOVE, Peter (Austin O'Brien, left), Trace (Patrick Bergin, center), and Jade (Crystal Celeste Grant, right) escape the destruction of the virtual reality city.

RIGHT ABOVE, A Walker Industry scientist observes Jobe (Matt Frewer, right) immerse himself in the virtual reality network. RIGHT BELOW, Jobe (Matt Frewer) activates his sinister computer network.

"Originally, we put six months into developing a script for Pierce Brosnan, when he was going to do the sequel, repeating his role as Dr. Angelo. We were very close to a final script, and then he got the James Bond role, and he had to take that, so we had no one from the first film. And the story we were dealing with depended very much on the relationship between Dr. Angelo and Jobe. When Pierce went, that whole script had to go.

"Pierce felt very badly about leaving the picture, but there was a

date conflict between the two films; he really had no choice about it. I was very happy for him, though, as he'd wanted to do James Bond since he was six years old. Nobody should ever stand in the way of someone getting their dream." Brosnan, of course, had previously lost the Bond role because of commitments to his television series *Remington Steele*.

"Six months of work were gone," says Mann. "We brought a new character into the script, called Benjamin Trace, and, after introducing him, he started to take over, making it a whole new piece. We recast the role of Jobe, from the first film, casting Matt Frewer, whom I'd worked with on *Max Headroom*."

Though Jobe, like Max's alter ego Edison Carter, is a man whose cyberspace persona allows him to be in two places at once, Mann says, "we were careful not to do *Max Headroom* again. Matt is very talented, and he improves a lot—which is great. A lot of his very dark humor, which I loved,

unfortunately had to be cut out because of the audience the studio wants for the picture.

"Jobe is an interesting character; he's a computer genius who has fallen into the wrong hands. He works for Jonathan Walker, who runs the Virtual Light Institute, which is experimenting with virtual reality. They are trying to build a virtual reality connection to the global network, because Walker believes that whoever builds it, will control it.

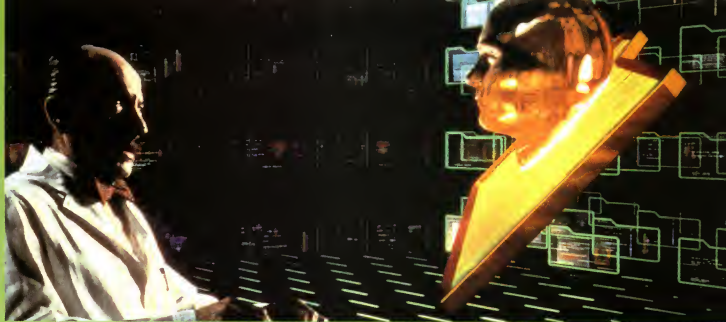
"Jobe is building a virtual city in which the library, for instance, is connected to every library in the world. His work is based upon the capabilities of the Chiron Chip, a communications processor created by Dr. Benjamin Trace (Patrick Bergin). This chip, along with Jobe's knowledge of computers, is what makes the world-wide VR network possible.

"Benjamin Trace is another interesting character. After he lost the chip to Walker's company, he withdrew from technology altogether, to get in touch with nature. It's years later, when he learns what Walker is doing with the chip, that he returns to 'civilization.'"

Dr. Trace, along with a handful of youthful allies, must eventually confront Jobe's plans for personal power. "Unfortunately," says Mann, "no one knows where Jobe is. Since he was in the explosion that ended the previous film, he spends most of his time in cyberspace. Anyone can easily contact him there, but no one knows where he is physically."

The sequel's special effects sequences, particularly those portraying Jobe's virtual city, were a primary concern during preproduction. "When we first costed the film at effects houses," says Mann, "we were looking for an outfit that could handle the entire job. One wanted \$24 million; the cheapest we found was \$9 million. Our total budget for this film was \$15 million."

Instead of reducing the film's effects, Mann elected to



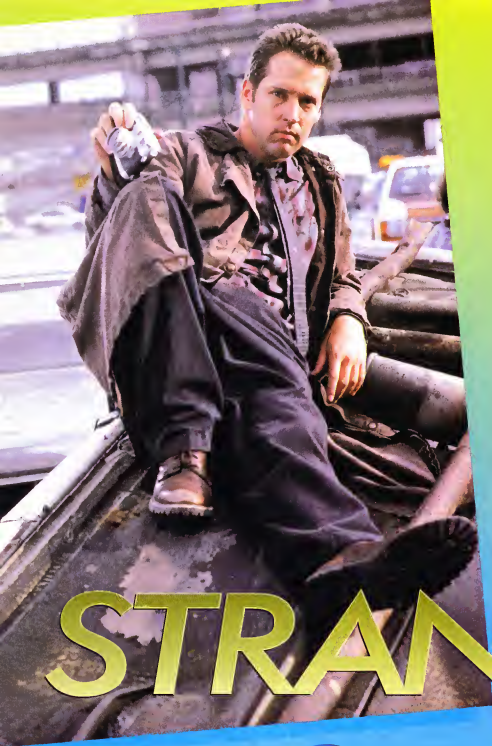
perform, uncredited, as the film's visual effects supervisor, designing the effects with his own staff, then taking the production's FX "blueprints" and the appropriate live-action footage to outside optical and digital effects houses. "With a storyboard artist, we designed every scene, with color storyboards that included all our elements, sets, colors, textures, lighting, every little thing, and when you see that, you see exactly what we shot. The majority of work was done by Cinesite, they were very helpful to us. But we also had work done in L.A., in London and in Canada.

"With a sequel," Mann says, "you do have to carry over some elements from the first film, or else part of your audience is likely to feel cheated, and that can make sequels more difficult than an original that you can take in any direction. This sequel has action, special effects, kids, dogs, everything

that's supposed to be trouble.... It's considered very dangerous to have all those elements in your first theatrical film.

"This picture has action practically all through it, but the story emerges from the action, and that's the way to do it. Action, special effects are great, but a story has to be character-driven."

Mann's writing credit won't make much change in his career, he expects. "I enjoy writing, and I think it's necessary for a director to be involved, at least, in preparing a script that he's going to be shooting; but I remain, first and foremost, a director." Mann intends to continue his commercial career, while cherry-picking the best of the film and TV scripts that come his way. Whether *Lawnmower Man 2* will bring more intriguing projects to his door will be determined when the film opens this April. □



STRANGE

Karl Schaefer's new creation is anything but ordinary.

BY LISA MACCARILLO

STRANGE IS AS STRANGE DOES on Fox TV's acclaimed new series *Strange Luck*, where a brake job on a car can foretell redemption for a repentant murderer, or a wrong turn can mean life or death for a desperate jumper. Chance Harper (played by D.B. Sweeney) is a lightning rod for the unexpected, a link between the chaos of a violent world and the strange symmetry of his unprecedented fate.

Since his family died in a fiery plane crash in which he was the sole survivor, Harper's life has been at the whim of dramatic runs of good, bad, or just plain strange luck. On one show he saves his mechanic from a suicide attempt and rear-ends a taxi cab in the same

day. An innocent man is about to be executed for a crime the mechanic committed, but the only way to prove it is to come up with the murder weapon...which just happens to be hidden somewhere inside the rear-ended taxi cab. Another week, Harper is trying to pass a driving test and ends up right in the middle of a kidnapping scheme.

No matter what crosses his path, Harper doesn't avert his gaze from whatever good or evil is encroaching on his life, and he doesn't turn his back on what his strange fate calls for him to do. "Chance Harper feels a responsibility to take this gift and use it right. If he senses something is about to happen he'll go with it and see where it takes him," says series creator Karl Schaefer, whose proclivity for the unknown and unexplained has found a perfect home in *Strange Luck*'s 8 P.M. Friday time slot—right before *The X-Files*. "Chris Carter found a really good audience with *The X-Files*, and I said when I pitched our show to Fox, 'I can write for these people.' People who watch these shows aren't people who normally watch TV. They're not the 'TGI-Friday' kind of folks. I think our audience has been looking for something intelligent that's not typical or usual."

Schaefer, who executive produces the show along with John J. Sakmar, Kerry Lenhart, and Michael Cassutt, had to look no further for inspiration than the strangeness which has charmed his own life. "I've saved many people in my life," he says. "One guy was jumping off a bridge. I rescued two people who

were being held at gunpoint, one person who was drowning. Since I was a kid I was always impressed by how weird life can be."

D.B. Sweeney has starred in TV and features alike, including the films *Fire in the Sky*, *Roommates*, *Memphis Belle*, and *Gardens of Stone*, as well as the highly acclaimed telefilms *Lonesome Dove* and *Miss Rose White*, among others. "It's tremendously hard to find an experienced actor who is in the right place in his life and in his career who is willing to work as hard as you have to for television," Schaefer says. "He came late in the game and was just a godsend. He nailed the part. So, we feel very lucky that we got him when we did. All of the actors come from features, so the show has a very movielike feel about it."

"D.B. tries to get as involved as he can in the show," says *Strange Luck's* supervising producer John Peter Kousakis. "He likes doing a lot of his own stunts, which takes time to coordinate. We must be sure not to put him in any danger, or take him too close to the edge, while trying to be as authentic with the action as we can."

Although the pilot was shot in downtown Los Angeles, the series is now filmed on the streets of Vancouver, Canada. Schaefer notes, "We were looking for a precise mood and look to form the background for the characters and the strange circumstances of their lives. We were going for a very noir-ish, city look. What we had to do to achieve that look, for budgetary reasons, was to take the show up to Canada."

"It's a show that is street versus soundstage," adds Kousakis. "We're out in the elements, shooting on practical locations, shooting longish days because we're fighting to get the best film we can on screen. We have a budget that is fairly tight and a very ambitious staff of creators. A show like *Strange Luck* can deal with almost any subject matter and get away with it. There's an awful lot of freedom in that challenge because there are no limits to what you can do."

When Kousakis signed onto the production "I knew I was entering another world, so to speak," he says. He describes *Strange Luck* as "an amalgamation of so many different aspects of life. I think it's unique in that it incorporates what every person experiences at one point in their life, and on the



D.B. Sweeney plays Chance Harper whose life is filled with very strange luck. He makes an effort not to turn his back on anything fate calls him to do.

encourage a policy of allowing the cast an opportunity to contribute creatively to each week's episode within Schaefer's clear blueprint. I think the challenges of this show have been to balance the creative input and the creative intent of Karl Schaefer with those of a very, very stellar, talented cast," says Kousakis. "The challenge has been to get everybody to collaborate on a creative level to take this particular project to as high a level as we could possibly get. There's always an intensity that runs through the day-to-day process simply because every-

gressmen, lawyers. She changes from episode to episode. We're sort of trying to figure out who she is."

Like D.B. Sweeney, the actresses on the show come from a feature film and stage background. Frances Fisher, best remembered as Strawberry Alice in Clint Eastwood's *The Unforgiven*, has also appeared in the films *Tough Guys Don't Dance*, *Patty Hearst*, and, forthcoming, *The Stars Fell on Henrietta*. Pamela Gidley's credits include appearances in *Twin Peaks: Fire Walk With Me*, *SFW*, *Liebestraum*, and *Permanent Record*. In addition to appearances in numerous television dramas, including *NYPD Blue*, *Chicago Hope*, and *Law & Order*, Cynthia Martells has appeared in such distinguished films as *New Jack City*, *Regarding Henry*, *Drop Zone*, and the upcoming *Nick of Time*.

Karl Schaefer has had his sights set on TV and movies since teaching filmmaking to a class of gifted students from the second through the fifth grade. A graduate of the University of Southern California film school, Schaefer first worked as a cinematographer on industrial films before finding the opportunity to work on his own movies. A script got the attention of former NBC chief Grant Tinker, which led to Schaefer's creation of the critically acclaimed hour-long drama *TV 101*, which received the Writers Guild Award for best episodic drama, as well as many other awards for its handling of social issues facing teens.

Schaefer's next series, *Eerie, Indiana*, centered around high strangeness in small town America, and it was in many ways ahead of its time. Television's current SF/fantasy boom had started with the debut of *The X-Files*, but had yet to solidify, and the show was placed in the early Sunday time-slot long owned by *60 Minutes*. "I loved making that show, but it had a really hard time on NBC in that time slot," Schaefer remembers.

During that time, he experienced some strange luck of his own. "I first met Chris Carter while he was doing *The X-Files* and I was doing *Eerie, Indiana*. Not only is he just a year older than I am but we're both from the same area in Bellflower, California—he was practically on my paper route as a kid. Now we're doing these strange, thriller-type shows. Finding that out was like, *whoa*, there must be something in the water."

Since its fall debut, the program has "delivered a 25 percent increase in ratings for Fox over programming a year ago on Friday nights at 8 P.M.," according to the A.C. Nielsen ratings. Schaefer and company hope this signals that the unorthodox series is beginning to create its audience, one not afraid to go wherever the currents of *Strange Luck* will take them. ■

SERIES

other hand there's just enough fantasy and weirdness to make it fun. It's sort of a cross between *Quantum Leap* and *Forrest Gump*. There's just enough fantasy and other-worldliness to it, and yet at the same time there's a reality to what goes on because we all experience these strange phenomena in our own lives."

After four years as a producer of the hit TV show *The Commish*, Kousakis relished the opportunity to work on a show with a new set of players and a new set of rules. "We're allowed an awful lot of freedom on this show and it's well-received by most directors. Rob McLaughlin, director of photography, and Treat Singer, our 'A' camera operator, work very closely with the directors to maintain a continuity of style. The show's producers

body's pushing to make it the best they can and do it in the time frame that we've been allowed."

Grounding the show in reality are three women characters who help Chance Harper make sense of his day-to-day battle with luck and lucklessness: his boss and ex-girlfriend Audrey (Pamela Gidley); Dr. Richter (Cynthia Martells), a criminal psychiatrist who is helping him get in touch with his past and his identity; and Angie (Frances Fisher), an enigmatic coffee shop waitress who comes through for him in the strangest ways. "We're not really sure who Angie is or where she came from," Schaefer says. "She could be someone who was in the witness protection program. She could have been a CIA operative. She just knows everyone, senators, con-

When he was directing and producing *The Incredible Hulk*, Kenneth Johnson longed to do the classics. With his current series of telefilms, he may be creating one.

Alien Nation: Bright Horizon

BY DON E. PETERSON

WHEN THE *ALIEN NATION* TV SERIES FIRST premiered on the fledgling Fox network in the fall of 1989, it got off to a promising start—slowly building its ratings and forming a loyal fan base in the process.

At the controls was creator and executive producer Kenneth Johnson, who translated the big, 'shoot-'em up' feature film into a complex character study in race relations, thinly masked by its science fiction premise.

Then the bad news arrived. After 22 episodes, *Alien Nation* was prematurely canceled. These original episodes of *Alien Nation* currently air Sundays at 9 P.M. ET and 1 A.M. ET on the Sci-Fi Channel. Nearly five years after the cancellation, Fox revived the show as a series of very successful made-for-TV movies; currently, *Alien Nation* is enjoying a renaissance.

"The show was always popular, Fox just canceled us at the wrong time—it was their mistake," says



Emily Francisco (Lauren Woodland), under the malevolent gaze of the charming-but-deadly Ahpossno in 1994's revival telefilm, Alien Nation: Dark Horizon.

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Few offer a more realistic view of Hollywood than the screenwriter behind *Alien*, *Total Recall* and the current *Screamers*.



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The Cover: *Alien Nation's* many fans believe the show was canceled prematurely. Very successful telefilms have taken up where the series left off. Find out why *Alien Nation* appeals to us in the article on page 48.

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Johnson, now pleased that the movies he directed are currently ranking as the highest rated made-for-TV programming on the Fox network. "I think the climate is always there for a good show if it's given a shot, and a reasonable opportunity in a particular time period. When we first aired, it was tough because we were up against *Monday Night Football*, and Fox had started programming Monday night. They got much higher numbers than they expected, but they canceled us anyway. The next year Peter Chernin stood in front of the Television Critics Association and publicly apologized, saying the canceling of *Alien Nation* was the biggest mistake they ever made."

It's a rarity in the small screen medium to have a failed TV show resurrected years later as made-for-TV movies; Johnson believes that's a testament to the show's quality and the bond viewers made with the characters and storylines. "It's a cultural thing more than anything," says Johnson. "The engine that drives *Alien Nation* is the clash of culture and what it's like to be this small group of people totally transplanted into a new, but not always accept-

ing environment. That's where we get the sparks and what makes the show really cool. When Detective Matt Sikes discovers that it takes three aliens to have sex to procreate or George Francisco is trying to understand certain human customs, it creates all sorts of great conflict. Someone said in a review that the Francisco family was the most all-American family since *The Waltons*, and I was like 'Yes—that's the review I want,' because that's what this show is all about. It's about what it's like to fit in here. We've gotten so many awards from Hispanic, Asian, and civic organization groups because they understand the show and that it's about what it's like to be different."

The premise for the series followed L.A.P.D. cops Matthew Sikes (Gary Graham) and Newcomer George Francisco (Eric Pierpoint) as mismatched partners fighting crime and learning about each other in futuristic 1995 Los Angeles. The twist, of course, is that Francisco is one of 'the Newcomers,' a race of space aliens marooned on our planet after a crashlanding. Through the Francisco family, we experience the trials of aliens attempting to assimilate



into Earth society, despite the racial intolerance of the public-at-large, who label them "slags."

The made-for-TV movies pick up a few years later; both the recent *Dark Horizon* and last fall's *Body and Soul* dealt with the secrets of the Newcomer slave ships that brought them here.

Millennium, planned to air this spring (though, if it's ready in time for November sweeps week, you may already have seen it), will focus more on the human relationships that were a staple of the series. The story takes place during the last week of 1999.

"I like working with themes for each episode, so this one is about problems with 'instant gratification,'" says Johnson. "I'm not so much interested in what the plot is about, I'm interested in what the show is about. Everybody in this episode is looking for instant gratification. Matt is looking for a quick and easy way to pass his Detective Two test so he can get a bump up. George is looking for a quick and easy way for new technology so he can do things faster. Emily is desperately trying to connect with a boy and she

needs a particular synthesizer so she can play in his band. And the most dangerous one of all is what Buck [the Francisco's son] gets involved with because Buck is always the one who has had the most problems and is looking for some sort of spiritual enlightenment. And he falls in with an enigmatic cult promising spiritual enlightenment by using a box that is a portal to an alien world where you are guided by a master who helps you find enlightenment. You have to be careful though, or it can be a really bad trip."

According to Johnson, one of the most positive aspects of the new regime at Fox is its understanding of the show. Whereas previously the network wanted these two-hour movies to be big "event" shows with "laser guns, tanks, and saving the world," now Johnson is allowed to dig more deeply into the interpersonal relationships.

"You can't save the world every time, and indeed *Millennium* is not about saving the world, ultimately, it's about saving Buck Francisco," says Johnson. "So it becomes a personal thing for George and a powerful issue for him and hey, we didn't *have* to save the Northern Hemisphere. Surely future movies will have enough razzle dazzle and action-adventure for fans of that aspect of the show, but we also hope to fully mine and explore the relationship and psychological drama of the characters. For me, the show really comes alive when they're banging heads around the dinner table or Matt and George are bouncing off each other in the halls of the police department."

If there is any part of *Alien Nation* that Johnson is not in love with, it's the heavy special effects makeup required by the show's premise. Not only is it time-consuming and uncomfortable for the actors, but the expenses account for a considerable amount of the telefilm's budget, which Johnson tells us averages just under \$5 million.

"It's a nightmare because it's a big expense," says John-

Opposite, a Tenconese giant (Tiny Ron, left) and an infant (Aimee & Danielle Warren) rumored to be half-human harbor secrets, and raise questions, in Body and Soul. Above, George Francisco (Eric Pierpoint, right) learns about a Tenconese scientist's secret research from her daughter (Kristin Davis of Melrose Place).



Above, in *Dark Horizon*, Commander Burak (Nina Foch, right), arrived to enslave the escaped Tencnones and the humans, consults with Ahposno, the series. Opposite, from right, Matt Sikes (Eric Pierpoint) must contend with an odd couple who have escaped from a secret research laboratory in *Body and Soul*.

son. "The normal budget for makeup on a two-hour movie is about \$50,000, but on *Alien Nation* it's over \$500,000. When you call central casting and say 'send me 20 aliens' you also have to say 'send me 20 makeup people' at the same time. We've been lucky though. The people who have worked with us won Emmies for their work on the series and were nominated again for *Dark Horizon*. It's brilliant the stuff they do, day in and day out. You can walk up to these people in makeup, look closely at them, and it's astonishing how real they look."

After *Millennium* airs, Johnson confirms that Fox has ordered three more scripts with a commitment to

produce two of them at this time. Assigned with the responsibility for keeping the shows fresh while remaining true to the core concept is a talented group of writers including Diane Frolov and Andrew Schneider (*Dark Horizon*), and Renne and Harry Longstreet (*Body And Soul*), as well Johnson himself (*Millennium*).

The next installment will begin shooting this spring and will be entitled *The Enemy Within*, dealing with a subgroup of aliens on the planet that no one likes to talk about. "They're an untouchable group among the alien Newcomers," says Johnson, "the lowest of the low, so it becomes a very scary thing. They live in the sewers of L.A. and it's a whole different kind of alien society that has been developing from their people."



The other committed episode is *The Udara Legacy*, which Johnson hints is about "control."

"It's hard not to talk about this one without giving it away, but it's about people who were programmed internally to accomplish a lot of things of great merit to help set the Newcomers free when they were slaves, and now the same people are being used to commit some really scary crimes."

While Johnson would love to see *Alien Nation* return on a weekly basis, he understands Fox's delight in having a

guaranteed ratings winner in their Tuesday made-for-TV movie time slot.

"It would seem to make sense to bring it back as a series, but on the other hand Fox knows that *Alien Nation* works very well as two-hour movies," says Johnson. "And, since they're doing 20 movies a year, by commissioning two of them from us they've already taken care of ten percent of their schedule with something they *know* is going to deliver for them. Why mess with a good thing?"

"Still, I prefer the one-hour format. I think trying to do these big-event shows can sometimes become too tedious and predictable. It also takes the show away from what was, to me, its most interesting aspect—which was the relationships, the conflicts of culture, and the quirkiness of these odd folks living among us."

When Johnson was first approached to transform the 1988 theatrical film, starring James Caan and Mandy Patinkin, into a TV series, he wasn't sure if it would work. After watching the movie a couple of times, he found that if he could center the show around "family" then there might be something for him to latch on to. "The movie had a brilliant premise," says Johnson, "that Gale Anne Hurd and Rockne S. O'Bannon had created — the world's newest minority. But the movie very quickly became 'Miami Vice with Coneheads.'"

"The most interesting moment in the movie for me was when George got picked up from his home by Matt. At this point, George waves goodbye to his Newcomer family, who were standing on the porch; and I wanted to know who *they* were and what it was like to be a family under these conditions. I told Fox, if I could do a series about that, then it would be interesting—and they went along with it."

While a hiatus such as the one between *Alien Nation's* life as a series and its triumphant return can create casting problems as actors take on new commitments and new priorities, Johnson was pleased to find everyone available and willing to come back to the fold. "We had all become great friends on the series, and everyone was terrific," he says. "They all really cared about their characters, and each other; when the show was canceled, it was like hearing that a young friend had been killed in an auto accident. You didn't have the time to say goodbye and there was no closure. Eric particularly took it hard because he hadn't finished with George yet. So, when we got the order, everybody wanted to come back—even several of the actors who had moved on in other directions and other careers."

While TV has never been too kind to the fantasy and science fiction genre, Johnson has lucked out over the years, having been involved with a number of ground-breaking, quality shows.

He got his start in the '70s as a writer for *The Six Million Dollar Man* and, perhaps inspired by *The Bride of Frankenstein*, pitched the idea of creating a 'bionic woman'—which, of course, spun off into its own, arguably superior, series.

"At that time I became the youngest and lowest paid producer at Universal Studios," recalls Johnson, who then went on to bring Marvel Comics' 'big green fightin' machine *The Incredible Hulk* to the small screen.

"They asked me to do the *Hulk* and I said 'Wait a minute guys, I was trained in Shakespeare, O'Neil, Pinter—I can do other things,'" he recalls. "Hollywood, though, is always bent on narrow-casting you. So I did *The Hulk* and it was supposed to be a trade-off for doing *Ivanhoe* as a miniseries, but as it was *The Hulk* wouldn't go away and stayed on the air for five years. *Ivanhoe*, of course, never happened—what a surprise."

Ironically, Johnson has been able to parlay his "classics"



training and experience into his genre shows, which he feels may be one reason they've tended to survive as other SF-TV has quickly faded.

"My love of the classics has never really ill served me," he observes. "I try to make certain everything we do has substance to it. It's funny because *The Incredible Hulk's* largest audience was not kids, but women. Then men, then teens, and then kids. Kids would tune into it originally to see the big green man crash through the walls, but adults could see there was something going on here. It was the same with the *V* miniseries. There was enough razzle-dazzle to get people to tune into it, but once they got there, they saw the story was about characters."

While on the subject of *V*, the popular mid-'80s miniseries provided one of Johnson's major heartaches when Warner Brothers decided to take it into a different direction with an inferior sequel and a subsequent weekly series run. "It was very hard to create a baby and give it over to foster parents you didn't like or trust to do it," says Johnson. "But it wasn't going to be possible for me to do it the way I wanted to. I would have certainly loved to stay with it, but they wanted to

Continued on page 79

WHERE IS DOCTOR WHO?

"There are worlds out there where the sky is burning. The sea's asleep, and the rivers dream; People made of smoke, and cities made of song. Somewhere there's danger. Somewhere there's injustice. And somewhere else the tea's getting cold! Come on Ace, we've got work to do!"

—Dr. Who's last words in the final episode of "Survival."

BY DAVID J. HOWE

DECEMBER 6, 1989, WAS A sad day for the millions of *Doctor Who* fans worldwide; this was the date on which the series' final episode, ironically titled "Survival," was first transmitted on BBC television in Britain.

Since then, there have been vague promises from the BBC that *Doctor Who* was safe with them for the '90s, and there have been several attempts to produce a *Doctor Who* film, none of which have as yet come to fruition. Several production companies expressed an interest in making a new series if the BBC did not wish to do so itself, but none of these companies seemed to be able to get the project off the ground.

Recently, Steven Spielberg's Amblin production company was involved in discussions about a new series, but, as Spielberg's staff have become embroiled in the much larger task of launching the Dreamworks SKG studio, these plans are now in the hands of producer Philip Segal, with the current proposition to produce a two-hour long *Doctor Who* TV movie which, if successful, might lead to a new series. At this writing, there is still no news on the casting of the Doctor (suggestions have included Alan Rickman, Eric Idle, John Cleese, Dudley Moore, and, the current favorite, Simon Callow) or his companions (Pamela Anderson was a hot favorite for a time), and a November,

Patrick Troughton played the mop-topped second Doctor, seen here contemplating his pocket-flute aboard TARDIS; "Power of the Daleks," 1966.





ABOVE, the third Doctor, Jon Pertwee, with Ogrons fore and aft, in "Day of the Daleks," 1972.

OPPOSITE, the Rani (Kate O'Mara), disguised as a companion, conspires with a tetrap in "Time and the Rani," 1987.

1995, start date for filming has turned to vapor, with Segal claiming a lack of interest on the part of Universal Studios for sending the whole project to limbo.

Though only six years absent from the TV screen, the story of *Doctor Who* begins almost two generations ago, in 1962, when the BBC commissioned an internal report on science fiction, with a view toward getting some sort of SF-related show on the air. The results of this initial report were taken forward by Sydney Newman, who had just started as the BBC's head of drama; Donald Wilson, the head of the script department; Alice Frick and John Brayton, drama script editors; producer-director Rex Tucker; and writer C. E. Webber, who together outlined and formalized a format for a series in which an elderly man and his granddaughter, together with two schoolteachers from the granddaughter's school, have adventures in time and space via the elderly man's own time machine.

Doctor Who was first broadcast on Saturday, November 23, 1963—certainly a weird contrast to the news coverage of the assassination of John

F. Kennedy, which had occurred the day before—with the elderly man known only as 'the Doctor,' so that the title of the series reflected the unknown background of the leading character as well as the unusual nature of the series itself.

The first story, "100,000 B.C.," saw the Doctor and his granddaughter Susan (Carole Ann Ford), along with teachers Ian Chesterton (William Russell) and Barbara Wright (Jacqueline Hill), traveling in the Doctor's time machine, called TARDIS ("Time And Relative Dimension In Space"), to the Stone Age, where they became involved in a power struggle between two leaders of a tribe that had lost the secret of fire. From this humble beginning, *Doctor Who* was to become the longest-running SF series anywhere in the world and was seen by viewers across the globe.

One unique aspect of the series that has promoted its longevity is the remarkable manner in which the writers of the series incorporated changes in the lead casting into the storyline. The Doctor was always accompanied by his "companions," usually likeable young adults who served as listeners as the Doctor expounded Time Lord philosophy while delivering story

exposition. Most often Earth natives who had stumbled into adventures well over their heads, the companions tagged along with the Time Lord anywhere from a few weeks to a few years, depending sometimes on the level of their popularity and others on the fortunes of their own personal life, or career. Similarly, the lead role was itself changeable, though by a very different device.

The first Doctor was played by William Hartnell, an elderly, white-haired figure of a basically paternal nature. Toward the end of a battle against the dreaded Cybermen, the Time Lord collapsed. To the amazement of companions Ben (Michael Craze) and Polly (Anneke Wills), he then changed his appearance before their eyes. This process was called regeneration, and, using it, the Doctor could effectively cheat death and build a new body for himself, a change that was accompanied by a curious transformation of his personality as well. The Doctor has so far regenerated six times, and each time his new persona has been markedly different from the one before.

Hartnell's Doctor could be brusque and harsh, but there was always a human side to the character. He had a

strong sense of justice and of what was right, and always sided with the oppressed. He was very fond of his granddaughter Susan and was visibly moved when she left him. He also became quite attached to his other companions, Ian and Barbara, Vicki (Maureen O'Brien), Stephen (Peter Purves), Dodo (Jackie Lane), and Ben and Polly, and always tried to ensure that they were safe as they traveled through space and time.

The second Doctor, appearing eight weeks into the fourth season, was played by Patrick Troughton, a marked contrast to the first incarnation. The second Doctor had a Beatles-like mop of brown hair and a pixelike enthusiasm for all the situations in which he found himself. He liked playing the clown, leading his enemies to underestimate him, and, often in times of stress, he would pull a recorder from his pocket to tootle a tune. Initially, Ben and Polly were suspicious of this stranger who claimed to be the Doctor, but he soon enough earned their trust. Others who traveled with the second Doctor were the young Scot Jamie (Fraser Hines), Victoria (Deborah Watling), and Zoe (Wendy Padbury). Troughton's era also brought to a peak the age of the great *Doctor Who* monsters, with Daleks, Cybermen, Ice Warriors, and Yeti coming up against the Doctor and his friends.

Eventually the Doctor was captured and put on trial by his peers, the Time Lords, and sentenced to exile on Earth with a new appearance, in which he sharply resembled actor Jon Pertwee. Along with the change of appearance came another change in style and manner. The third Doctor was a bit of a showman and a dandy, favoring velvet smoking jackets and shirts with frilled cuffs and fronts. He loved action and took every opportunity to leap into a hovercraft, auto-gyro, fast car, or multiterrain vehicle in the pursuit of his enemies.

In keeping with this turn toward the Bondian, and owing to his Earth confinement, the Doctor began working closely with U.N.I.T. (the United Nations Intelligence Taskforce), under the command of Brigadier Alistair Gordon Lethbridge-Stewart (Nicholas Courtney). His companions included Doctor Elizabeth Shaw (Caroline John), Jo Grant (Katy Manning), and journalist Sarah Jane Smith (Elisabeth Sladen). His greatest foe of the time was "the Master" (a role originated by Roger Delgado and later carried on by Anthony Ainley). The Master was a renegade Time Lord dedicated to the downfall of the Doctor, and the third



Doctor came up against him on numerous occasions.

Sarah Jane was witness to the Doctor's next regeneration, after his body was riddled with deadly blue radiation from the cave of "the Great One," a giant spider on the planet Metabelis 3. The fourth Doctor, played by Tom Baker, was typified by his incredibly long scarf, battered felt hat and a childlike innocence to all around him. This Doctor was perhaps the most alien of them all and could agonize over the death of a daisy while remaining apparently unmoved over

the extinction of an entire civilization. This Doctor's companions included Harry Sullivan (Ian Marter), the savage Leela (Louise Jameson), K-9 the electronic computer shaped like a dog (voice by John Leeson and, in the 17th season, David Brierley), the Time Lady Romana who went through two incarnations (Mary Tamm and Lalla Ward) while traveling with the Doctor, Adric (Matthew Waterhouse), Nyssa (Sarah Sutton), and Tegan (Janet Fielding). But neither of them, with the possible exception of the second incarnation of Romana, really



ABOVE, *The Master* (Roger Delgado), as always, plots the demise of the Doctor in "Terror of the Autons," 1971. RIGHT, *The fourth Doctor* (Tom Baker) and fellow Gallifreyan Time Lord Castellan Spandrell (George Pravda) in "Assassin," 1976.

came to grips with who the Doctor really was.

After the Doctor sustained a nasty fall from a radio telescope during a battle against the Master, he regenerated once more into the form of Peter Davison, before the eyes of Adric, Nyssa, and Tegan.

In contrast to the fourth incarnation, the fifth Doctor was portrayed as an English gentleman with a passion for cricket and who liked to dress in cricketer whites, even when there was no game to be played. He flew breathlessly and headlong into danger and always tried to look after his companions in a brotherly way. Adric, Nyssa, Tegan, Turlough (Mark Strickson), and Peri (Nicola Bryant) were his companions.

The next regeneration was brought on by the Doctor contracting the fatal disease Spectrox Toxaemia, and Colin Baker took over the role. The sixth Doc-

tor was initially unstable and prone to violent fits of temper. His companion Peri was initially very unsure of where she stood, but the Doctor eventually settled down and she enjoyed several lively adventures with him.

With a bright coat of clashing colors, the Doctor was always the center of attention, and his personality reflected his dress sense. His companions were Peri and computer programmer Mel (Bonnie Langford). This incarnation of the Doctor underwent another trial by his peers, this time led by the Valeyard (Michael Jayston), an evil manifestation of the Doctor. The Valeyard's plans failed and the Doctor was found innocent of all charges against him.

After the TARDIS was attacked by the Rani, another evil Time Lord, the Doctor regenerated into the slither and more mysterious figure of the seventh Doctor, played by Sylvester McCoy. This incarnation of the Time Lord revealed hitherto unseen talents and harbored deep, dark secrets. His

companions Mel and then Ace (Sophie Aldred) really did not understand what the Doctor's motives were, but more and more clues and hints emerged that the Doctor might really be much more than just a Time Lord. He seemed to have a dark history which was on the verge of unfolding, and which we may now never discover.

One of the most popular aspects of the series has been the monsters. In only the second story, called "The Mutants" (also known as "The Daleks"), written by Terry Nation, a race of alien creatures was introduced that was to become as popular as the program that spawned them and ultimately led to the word's entry in the Oxford English Dictionary.

The exterior of a Dalek is just an advanced travel machine for the twisted and mutated being that lives inside. The Daleks have no morals and no pity, and their attack cry of "Exterminate!" echoes around the galaxy as they conquer and destroy everything that stands in their way. The Doctor and his friends have crossed their path on several occasions, and the Doctor has become the Daleks' greatest nemesis.

The Daleks were the first alien menaces encountered by the Doctor, but they were by no means the last. Over the years, there have been many different alien races, monsters, creatures, and enemies featured in the series, the majority of which have come to a sticky end at the hands of the Doctor.

The silver Cybermen stand second only to the Daleks as the most popular creatures to appear in *Doctor Who*. Once human, they had steadily replaced their bodies with limbs of metal and plastic, until only their brains remained. In this form, they finally abolished emotions from their race, becoming coldly logical and dedicated to their own survival. Other memorable foes include the Ice Warriors—green, scaly creatures from Mars with Earth invasion their primary goal—and the Yeti, robots created by an alien intelligence with their own plans for conquest of Earth, first using a Tibetan monastery as a base, and then by invading the London underground train system. More recently, we met the Haemovores, blood-sucking creatures from the depths of the sea; Sil, a maggot-bodied creature intent on maximizing his personal profits and gains at the expense of others; and the Vervoids, a race of lethal plant-creatures which tried to take over a space liner.

As the years passed, the creatures became more sophisticated. *Doctor*



Who featured early examples of animatronics as well as puppets, cable control, radio control, and more traditional forms of monster costume and makeup created from latex and clay. To the extent allowed by its budget, *Doctor Who* has always been at the forefront of technology and was among the first television programs to make use of Chromakey (known as "Color Separation Overlay," or CSO, in the U.K., allowing one image to be overlaid onto another by using a video equivalent of film's blue-screen process), the Quantel digital image processor, and HARRY, a sophisticated electronic paintbox. *Doctor Who* also pioneered the use of slave cameras (where the camera movements on a model can be synchronized with those on a real-life subject, allowing the two to be seamlessly combined) and borrowed the slit-scan process developed on the film *2001: A Space Odyssey* to create the innovative title sequences for the late Jon Pertwee and Tom Baker years.

The thirtieth anniversary of the series brought a television special to the BBC. "Dimensions in Time" featured Tom Baker, Colin Baker, Peter Davison, Jon Pertwee, and Sylvester McCoy, each Doctor confronting the others in a time-trap engineered by their long-time foe the Rani (Kate

O'Mara). In the same year, BBC radio presented a new six-part *Dr. Who* adventure featuring Jon Pertwee, "The Paradise of Death." But the one-shots have only served to stoke the appetite of *Doctor Who* fandom for more. Virgin Publishing has helped bring the Doctor and his companions into the 1990s with the "New Adventures" series, which pits the seventh Doctor against foes old and new, while "The Missing Adventures" are new stories featuring previous Doctors and their companions. Virgin also has been at the forefront of publishing high-quality factual books about the series, including *Doctor Who: The Sixties* and *Doctor Who: The Seventies*, which look in detail at the decades in question, and a series of *Doctor Who Handbooks*, one per Doctor, with a close-up look at each Doctor and his respective era. BBC Video has released old *Doctor Who* stories at the rate of one or two a month and are more than halfway to having the complete available back-list available to rent or buy. Marvel Comics publishes a monthly *Doctor Who Magazine*, and there are also telephone cards, trading cards, belt-buckles, lamp-shades, calendars, and all manner of other tie-in pieces of merchandise being produced, in response to

continuing demand.

The fans certainly are ready for the full-scale return of *Dr. Who*; in the current age, where every modest genre success seems to beget a sequel, if not a series, there seems little doubt that one day soon the Doctor will be back.

Virgin Publishing's *Doctor Who* titles can be obtained from most bookshops in the U.K. and from selected stores in the United States (including Borders Books and Barnes & Noble). In case of difficulty in the United States, please contact the distributors, London Bridge General Distribution Services Inc. (85 River Rock Drive, Suite 202, Buffalo, NY 14207). BBC Videos are distributed in the United States by CBS/Fox and can be found at outlets of Suncoast Video and other video stores. A large selection of *Doctor Who* merchandise is available from the mail-order company 800-TREKKER. (1-800-873 5537).

David J. Howe is regarded as one of the foremost authorities on Doctor Who. He wrote the best-selling Timeframe: The Illustrated History to celebrate the program's thirtieth anniversary in 1993 and is co-author of numerous other Doctor Who titles, including Doctor Who Companions, Doctor Who: The Sixties, Doctor Who: The Seventies, and the Handbook series of books.

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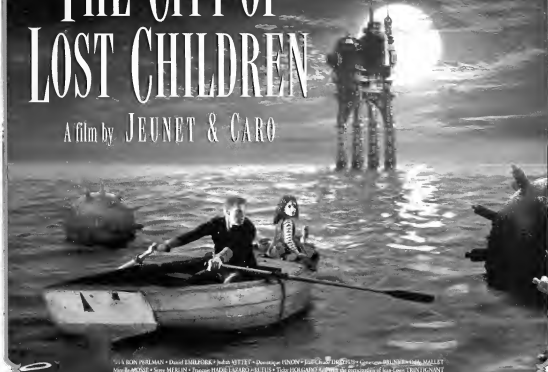
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Screenplay by Gilles GILBERT • Jean Pierre BUNNET • Marie CARO • Dialogue by Gilles GILBERT • Dialogue by Gilles GILBERT • Dialogue by Gilles GILBERT • Dialogue by Gilles GILBERT
Art director Jean BARBARIS • Camera by Jean Paul GILBERT • Sound engineer Pierre DUCOFFRE • Editor Henri SCHNEIDER • Second editor Lionel FARELL
Sound mixing Vincent SAN-OLIVIER and Thierry LEROUX • Special effects PIERRE • Optical effects DANIEL STOUTER • Produced by Claude ORSARD
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Bordertown Terror

Desperado director Robert Rodriguez offers a different kind of vampire in *From Dusk Till Dawn*.

BY LISA MACCARILLO

IN COLLEGE, ROBERT RODRIGUEZ KNEW A FELLOW STUDENT who crossed into bordertown Mexico and disappeared forever: "He was in this town over spring break. When they finally found him, he'd been sacrificed by a cult in Matamoros. People are wary of bordertowns."

The territory just beyond U.S. borders forms the backdrop for Rodriguez's third foray into bordertown lore, this time with the bullet-riddled, vampire-infested tale of Richie and Seth Gecko (played by Quentin Tarantino and George Clooney), the bank robbing, trigger-happy anti-heroes of *From Dusk Till Dawn*. "Richard's just broken Seth out of a Texas prison, and because they're both cold-blooded killers, the entire state of Texas and the FBI want to lynch them. So, they're making a mad dash for the Mexican border," synthesizes Tarantino, who also wrote the film's screenplay.



The Gecko brothers grease their path by taking a hostage. When "something unfortunate" happens to their victim while under Richie's care, they kidnap a preacher (Harvey Keitel) and his daughter (Juliette Lewis) to get across the border in their Winnebago. In Mexico, they take refuge in a seedy saloon which also happens to be the home of a pack of blood-thirsty vampires.

It's familiar territory for director Rodriguez, who explored bordertown violence in both his ultra low-budget (\$7,000) debut feature, *El Mariachi*, and its splashier follow-up, *Desperado*. Shot in L.A. for around \$17 million, *Dusk* evolved while Rodriguez and Tarantino were working on separate screenplays on Sony's Culver City lot. "We'd hang out sometimes while I was writing *Desperado* and

LEFT, Unaware that the supernatural is afoot, Richie Gecko (Quentin Tarantino) is about to make a very unwise move. BELOW, Outwardly an innocent haven for good times and lascivious conduct, this bordertown bistro is, in actuality, the nesting place of unspeakable evil.

he was writing *Pulp Fiction*, which was originally for TriStar," Rodriguez remembers. "We'd stay up late and talk because we were the only ones working on the lot at night. I was talking about my Mexico action movies and he said, 'I wrote a script for Mexico. It's a horror film.' I thought that was great. I'd always wanted to do a horror film set in





Mexico, but Quentin had already sold *From Dusk Till Dawn* for \$1,500; it was the first script he sold."

Years later, the script changed hands; when Tarantino was approached to direct, he immediately recalled his talks with Rodriguez. "It's about Mexican vampires, which is a completely different myth than the other vampire myth, so I wanted to do it rather than see somebody else do it," Rodriguez says. With his wife and co-producer Elizabeth Avellan pregnant with their first child, Rodriguez felt the timing was perfect to fit *Dusk* in before they became parents. "It was also the last Quentin script available until he writes something new. So, I figured I'd try it."

While both were in the middle of production on the anthology feature *Four Rooms*, Rodriguez and Tarantino "decided that if we could get this going, it would be a fun movie to shoot over the summer," says Rodriguez. "So, while I was mixing *Desperado* and *Four Rooms*, I was prepping *From Dusk Till Dawn*."

Rodriguez describes *Dusk* as being "like the monster in *The Thing*. It starts out being one thing and then re-forms into something else, with crazy people kidnapping and robbing in the first part, and moving over into complete fantasy/horror after they cross the border. When you're in another country and you don't know what the rules of that country are, or what kind of voodoo they have, you're the victim of another society. It's that kind of horror, which also gets mixed with humor, action, and drama."

After jumping the border, the Gecko brothers seek refuge in a seedy Mexican saloon. "I've seen real warehouses and biker bars in

Mexican towns and they're usually pretty inviting, but spooky looking," Rodriguez says. "We took that to an extreme level and came up with something that, on the outside, looks like any Mexican strip bar, but if you look real close, you start to see that it's an old temple that's been covered over with pieces of wood and sleazy neon signs. It looks like you're going through the gates of hell. And then you get inside and it's a pit, just skulls and bones and signs of death, even in the architecture. It's as though you're inside a sacrificial temple with the walls barely concealed by bad posters and velvet paintings. It's kind of a fun, crazy place."

The bar's design reflects a personal hell not only for the outlaws, but also for their hostage, a "reformed" preacher played by Harvey Keitel. "When they enter this hell, they've all got to come to terms with each other and with their fates," Rodriguez explains. "Jake is a preacher who doesn't believe in God anymore, and Harvey was dream-casting in that role."

No stranger to independent filmmaking, Keitel numbers among his credits Tarantino's *Reservoir Dogs* and Abel Ferrara's *Bad Lieutenant*, as well as numerous highly acclaimed films, including *Taxi Driver*, *Mean Streets*, and the recent *Clockers*. "Keitel is amazing. He gives the film so much weight just because he makes everything so believable," Rodriguez marvels. "He can take a shotgun and a baseball bat and turn them into a crucifix and make it look believable."

In the director's eyes, the entire cast helped elevate the project from the B-movie first envisioned into something unique: "It's fun seeing a movie that, in some ways, is sup-

posed to be an exploitation film, but with really big production values and really big stars. It's not a little scream-queen film anymore. It's something really bizarre that you'll probably never see again."

George Clooney, the Emmy-nominated star of television's *ER*, makes his big-screen debut as Seth. "George is really breaking out as an action god in this one," Rodriguez says. "He gets to do what you don't get to see him do on television. This is much edgier, darker stuff. He knew that this was his big chance and was very trusting of me as a director, but he also knew that I was really free in letting him invent what he wanted to do."

Despite the dark subject matter, Rodriguez, Clooney, and company maintained a light atmosphere on set. "We had a great time. George is actually a very funny, very comedic guy. He even had Harvey cracking up," Rodriguez recalls. "I like picking carefully who I work with—ultimately audiences have a better time if the filmmaker isn't worried about budgets and tripped-out stars, and is concentrating more on making a fun, creative movie. I think it becomes a good experience for everybody, not just the actors and crew, but the audience as well."

Tarantino, whom Rodriguez had also directed in *Desperado*, plays Seth's hot-headed younger brother Richie. "Unfortunately, his character is not in the movie as much as everybody else, so he wasn't around for all the monster stuff, but it was cool having him there, not just as an actor, but as the writer," Rodriguez says, pointing out that *Dusk* is his first project which he hasn't also written. "We had to be like Siamese twins. If I wrote the script, it would be easy for me to

LEFT, From left, Razor Charlie (Danny Trejo), the *Twister*'s bartender, director Rodriguez, bouncer Big Emilio (Ernest Garcia), and front door shill Chet (Cheech Marin), scowl for the camera. RIGHT, All hell breaks loose, and the bar's dancers (in this instance, Maria Diaz) lose much of their allure as they undergo an uncanny transformation.

know the intent of a given line and explain that to an actor. Directing *Dusk* made me realize how sparse and how unclear scripts can be. I mean, one line says: 'All hell breaks loose.' Well, what does that mean? I came up with my own idea about what that meant in specific detail, but it might be a completely different idea than what Quentin had in mind when he wrote it. You have to enter into his world and create your own out of the hints on the page. It's a completely different process than working from your own script."

At a pivotal moment in the film, when a main character dies, Rodriguez found himself once again comparing interpretations: "The next thing it says in the script is that one of the characters asks the character who just witnessed the death of a friend, 'How many bullets do you have left?' And obviously it should happen a few beats later, but the way I was pacing the story there was no room for that and it was going to seem kind of strange. A main character just got killed off and now they're asking for bullets? So I played it up for comic effect. I made them look for a moment like they felt really bad about this guy's death, and just when you think he's going to tell the other person that he's sorry he says, 'How many bullets do you have left?' Then they get right back into it because they're still surrounded by monsters and there's no letting up on the action. So, we did take things that were literally written down one way and play them the opposite way."

Dusk's vampires are based on myths never before explored in American horror films. "The Aztecs have statues of the vampire goddess who kept the hearts of men around her neck," Rodriguez says. "They seduced and sacrificed people with snakes and dances, and used their blood to feed the sun. They sacrificed at the drop of a hat."

KNB Effects' Greg Nicotero worked closely with Rodriguez in designing every stage of the vampires' metamorphoses. "The KNB guys got a good handle on what I wanted," comments the director. "It's very schizophrenic—not just fangs and the old vampire style, but an anything-goes kind of thing. So, I drew up some freaky drawings and handed them over to KNB, who made three-dimensional versions of them."

The pack of vampires is led by Salma Hayek, who steamed up the screen opposite Antonio Banderas in *Desperado*. "She comes out and does the snake dance with an albino snake, seducing everyone before the killing

begins," Rodriguez says, smiling. "On Salma, we had to put on full prosthetic make-up with contacts. I always knew when she walked on the set because everyone was screaming 'Oh my god!' I won't even say what her name is. She has a mouth in her stomach and chews people's heads off. It's pretty horrible."

"Right off the bat, we shot four days of dialogue, with intense actors pointing guns at each other, and then that Friday we were in the bar shooting the Spanish rock band during the last big party as the vampires are getting ready to kill, and then we shot the monsters. We shot effects in bursts, separated by acting and dialogue scenes, to give KNB a chance to catch up." The director promises

total mayhem in the film's final blow-out, with strippers turning into monsters inside the bar, and more surprises at the door. "Nightmares," he says with a sly smile. "There's some really creepy stuff in this movie. I cram in a lot so that people will get more pleasure watching it a second time—there will be things that they will miss the first time. I hope people will see that we can still experiment, have fun with the medium and twist things around. I'm having fun editing it, playing into the rules of what people think will happen and then slapping them over the head with something else in the next six seconds."

A filmmaker practically since he was old

Continued on page 72



MAX HEADROOM *Too Bold To Live?*

BY DENNIS FISCHER

A world where TVs can't be shut off, and where ratings are all that matter... some say it was too close to the truth.

ON NUMEROUS OCCASIONS, the major networks have attempted to create a science fiction series which will appeal to the most demographically desirable audience, young adults with spendable cash. Most such efforts show little understanding of the genre and what makes it work; most often, these have faded into well-deserved obscurity.

There have also been shows which caught on, lasting for several seasons, finally heading to syndication—and frequently finding a home on the Sci-Fi Channel. These are the popular fan favorites, viewed again and again and welcomed as entertaining old friends.

But no show in the annals of science fiction television, with perhaps the exception of Patrick McGoohan's superlative *The Prisoner*, made such an incredible impact in such a short time as did *Max Headroom*, now airing on the Sci-Fi Channel Saturdays at 10 P.M. and 2 A.M. Eastern Standard Time.





The word "virtual" wasn't yet part of the lexicon when Max became the digital avatar of the mid-'80s. **OPPOSITE,** Amanda Pays, later seen as Tina McGee in the TV series *The Flash*, as Theora Jones.



"We developed a video-clip show with this 'future generated' talking head called Max Headroom, and Andy said to me, why is he called Max Headroom, why is he computer generated, why does he say all the things he says? We had to go back and come up with a back-story for the character. In a sense, it was sort of the cart before the horse and we did it in reverse order."

The first expansions on the concept were penciled in by George Stone, a writer who, like Wagg, had come from an advertising background. Much of the look of *Max Headroom* was established by directors Rocky Morton and Annabel Jankel, who shot the British back-story for the initial Channel 4 U.K. telefilm, released in the U.S. as *Max Headroom: The Movie* by Lorimar Video. Max's dialogue was initially written by Paul Owen and David Hansen, whose job it was to supply scripts with "Maxisms" for the character to spout. However, Stone was only able to take

Max Headroom depicted a future ruled by television, and in the creation of that future, helped introduce cyberpunk concepts to a mass audience. It featured as its main character a computer-generated personality, in interaction with its carbon-based alter-ego Edison Carter (both characters superbly played by Canadian actor Matt Frewer before becoming neighbor to the kid-shrinking Rick Moranis, before his starring role in *Doctor, Doctor*, and before his vocal performances as the Pink Panther and the Exterminator on the U.S.A. Network's animated *Itsy Bitsy Spider*).

The premise centered around Carter as a lone-wolf investigative journalist for television's globe-spanning Network XXIII, wired to headquarters via his comptroller Theora Jones (Amanda Pays), aided by a typical, yet brilliant teenage computer whiz kid Bryce Lynch (Chris Young), and hounded by his computer alter ego Max Headroom, who possesses all of Carter's wildness and none of his restraint.

Other important characters included Blank Reg (William Morgan Shepherd), a punk grandfather who tries to keep the anarchic flame alive via a pirate television station known as "Big Time Television," Max's boss Murray (Jeffrey Tambor), and the ratings-driven, but people sensitive head of Network XXIII Ben Cheviot (George Coe).

Max's genesis started in 1982 when Chrysalis Records executive Peter Wagg and Channel 4's editor Andy Park brainstormed for a new way of presenting music videos.

"I certainly didn't want to have a human being, as on M-TV, linking the clips because, having worked in advertising, I just know that some celebrities don't travel well," said Wagg. "They may be loved in England but not in Australia or America and vice versa. I felt we needed to be as creative in the packaging of the show as the video clips that we were showcasing, and that's basically how it started."



OPPOSITE, The skyline of the unnamed city of the near-future where Network XXIII originated and, BELOW, Matt Frewer as Edison Carter, a modern-day Jekyll faced with a high-tech Hyde. RIGHT, Carter consults Bryce Lynch (Chris Young), a character that foreshadowed the '90's generation of cinematic "hacker heroes."

the concept so far, so Wagg brought in Steve Roberts who worked with the directors to flesh out the British film script, which in a revised version became the pilot and opening episode of the American TV series.

"The real interest in this thing," says Roberts, "was that you have a man able to talk to himself. Edison had very different characteristics from Max. Max was Edison loose—it was Edison's humor, it was his outrageousness, all of Edison's rebelliousness, whereas Edison was a corporation man, working as a journalist for a corporation and was used to it. Although he was always on the edge, he worked for the corporation.

"So it was wonderful. It was a man faced with his own self, but looking at the kind of naughty, creative, wonderful, fun side of himself. What we always wanted to develop was that relationship, and we never had the chance to truly develop it."

The Channel 4 version of *Max*, made to explain the character's back-story, was first broadcast in early April of 1985, followed by the series of video shows featuring *Max* running through July.

To generate interest in the premiere drama, Wagg convinced a friend who edited the media section of *The Guardian* newspaper to run an April Fool's Day story about how computer-generated characters stood ready to take over the media. On the Monday before the broadcast, Channel 4 was to run a scripted "debate," ending with a representative from the actor's union promising to stop the *Max Headroom* shows from broadcasting, for taking work away from union members. To complete the hoax, the fact that *Max* was played by Frewer, and not a computer-animated sprite, was kept secret until late in the series.

Cinemax aired the Channel 4 version of *Max*'s back-story as *Rebus: The Max Headroom Story* in 1985, and in August of that year initiated a mock talk show called *The Max Talking Headroom Show*. Produced out of New York, the show had *Max*, on a television screen, in partially scripted interviews with various celebrities.

Soon after, the character was spotted by the B.B.D. & O. advertising agency who was at the time looking for a spokesman with enough appeal to salvage the catastrophic introduction of the recently "improved" beverage, New Coke. The character was picked up and featured in a series of commercials, which failed to save the soft drink, but succeeded in creating a huge splash for *Max*.

Stu Blumberg at ABC had seen the Coke spots and saw the Channel 4 one-shot



drama, and contacted Wagg about creating a series around the character. With the aid of Phil DeGuere, the producer of the the post-Serling *Twilight Zone* show, Wagg was able to get the network to make a limited commitment to a series.

The complex physical production of the American series fell to line producer Brian Frankish (who later produced the film *Fed of Dreams*), aided by such people as art director Richard B. Lewis, story editor Steve Roberts, and Michael Cassutt, who moved into the slot when Roberts became producer.

Max's initial foray on U.S. network television on March 31, 1987, earned high ratings, but the numbers steadily declined through the remaining five episodes. Nevertheless, ABC kept sufficient faith in the series to renew it for a second season, broadcasting seven more episodes before throwing in the towel. The final episode, "Baby Grobags," was first broadcast in the U.K. in 1989, and wasn't broadcast in the United States until Bravo ran the series in 1994.

Michael Cassutt, whose post-*Max* career includes story editing for *Eerie, Indiana* and Showtime's *Outer Limits*, and is now producing Fox's growing hit *Strange Luck*, says

that the show quickly died for a variety of reasons. "It started out doing great because it was hyped incredibly. *Max Headroom* was all over the place; he was the spokesman for Coke at the time. It was at the absolute height of one of those classic advertising campaigns. I mean, my God, you just couldn't go anywhere without running into it.

"It was self-satirizing in a lot of ways. Peter Wagg had come out of British commercials, he was an advertising executive. He knew very well it was satire, and knew what he was satirizing. They were just having a ton of fun with it, but it was not a 'user-friendly' show by the standards of network television at that time, or even now."

Max Headroom demanded that viewers not sit passively, but keep their minds switched on. It was both incredibly sophisticated and presented a dark view of the world in every sense of the term. "There was hardly any daylight ever in any of the episodes," notes Cassutt. "It was all about a future that I don't think anybody would be dying to go live in. It had all those kinds of things working against it."

Another factor was that adult-oriented science fiction was never regarded as an

Continued on next page

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appropriate genre for the small screen. Previous SF TV, from *Star Trek* to *Time Tunnel*, tended to have an action-adventure format and an exploration theme; *Headroom* was earthbound, near-future science fiction with neither colorful aliens nor period costumes to provide eye candy for viewers, or such "kid-vid" trappings as spaceships and monsters that, to TV executives of the time, explained what limited appeal SF held for certain age groups. In 1987, the people who grew up watching *Trek*, *Twilight Zone*, and *Outer Limits*—a generation much more open to science fiction—were just beginning to gain power in the media, enough to OK the creation of a science fiction series, but not sufficient to allow the slow cultivation of an audience for such a show, as Fox is now willing to do for shows like *The X-Files* and *Strange Luck*.

Cassutt seems to doubt that a show like *Max Headroom* could survive even in today's more hospitable climate. "It's pretty damned dark and satirical.... I was amazed that anybody was watching it at all. Our numbers drifted from a 29 percent share down to about 19 or 20 percent, which was below what they wanted for that time period, since we were following *Moonlighting*. We came back for the second season and premiered against *Dallas* and *Miami Vice*, still at the top of its craze, being the 77 *Sunset Strip* of the '80s, and we were getting a 14 percent share." Even with the major networks' audience eroded by new networks, cable, and other competing forms of entertainment, a 14 percent share would today be considered abysmal, Cassutt points out, "but I was just amazed that we had that many people watching."

Another factor was that the show was uneven, as Cassutt admits. "Frankly, some of the shows were not as well told as they could have been. I think there are large incoherencies in many of those first episodes that make it impossible for anyone to figure out just what it is that is going on. I recall that, after we had been on the air for at least three weeks, the wife of someone working on the show commented that she wasn't exactly clear what Edison Carter did—and I figured, we're dead."

Network television storytelling is a form that demands simplicity, or at least clarity; the audience can't be expected to strain too hard to understand what is going on when they first tune in.

One master of the form is considered to be Roy Huggins, creator of *Maverick*, 77 *Sunset Strip*, and co-creator of *The Rockford Files*, well-known in the trade for putting forth a set of rules for successful television writing. *Max Headroom* broke several, Cassutt points out, "but the rule we broke pretty convincingly was 'who are the good guys and the bad guys.' We had Edison Carter, the good guy, who was clearly working for the bad guys. It's one of those weird dynamics that I took a lot of fun playing with, but I'm still convinced it was one of the big reasons the show was not a commercial success. It was

just very murky to people. Very realistic, I think, but it was hard to get a handle on at the beginning."

Max Headroom had the tactical problems of any television series start-up, regardless of how simple or complex. Imagine trying to produce the visual equivalent of *Blade Runner* every eight days, and you can imagine the daunting challenge that the producers faced and met.

Frequently, shows went right to the wire in terms of being prepared for broadcast, and some clarity would occasionally be lost in the editing. Fortunately, science fiction demands greater intelligence from its audience, an audience that must be open to ideas and speculations, and *Max Headroom* did find an appreciative audience, though it simply wasn't large enough to sustain such an expensive series.

"The thing that always amused me vastly," comments Roberts, "was how long it took them to wake up. *Max Headroom* was about how awful television is. It lagged and slatted and savaged television executives in their own language, *executes*. Everybody who was an executive was venal or stupid or misinformed." Referring to the ABC network's own executives, Roberts adds, "It took twelve episodes for them to work out that we were probably writing about them.... That's why they canceled us."

If one seeks the culprits who killed *Max Headroom*, there are plenty of suspects to go around. ABC was only going to pay so much for each episode and because of a rushed schedule, the first season incurred enormous cost overruns. The production company behind the American series, Lorimar, was losing money on each episode it made.

The network pitted *Max* against some of the toughest competition on television, as a desperate ploy to raise the sagging ratings in the time slot. Eventually ABC decided to throw in the towel and try something else. Whether they failed to understand it, or merely found other programs more entertaining or more comforting, the mass audience never did clasp *Max Headroom* to its collective bosom.

Nevertheless, *Max Headroom* remains landmark science fiction, and a fetish of what television can be to a continuing cult of *Max* fans. Like a lot of good SF, it tackled genuine issues: capitalism without conscience, media exploitation by terrorists, privacy in an age of omnipresent microchips and video cameras—all were repeated themes. Most notably, it was a show that addressed the issues central to the media that spawned it, critiquing the manner in which television feeds on its own audience, and posing the most dangerous question of all: If the media is totally controlled, how can the media-feed see the controlling hand?

For more about *Max Headroom*, check out a *Max* trivia game and episode guide, and download *Max* audio files in *The Dominion*, the Sci-Fi Channel's Website (<http://www.scifi.com>). □



EUROPE SCHEDULE

SCI-FI CHANNEL

TIME	MONDAY-FRIDAY
8-8:30A	G-FORCE
8:30-9A	GALAXY RANGERS
9-9:30A	ROBOTECH
9:30-10A	BIONIC SIX
10-10:30A	BIONIC WOMAN
10:30-11A	
11-11:30A	SIX MILLION
11:30A-12P	DOLLAR MAN
12P-12:30P	NIGHT GALLERY
12:30-1P	HITCHCOCK PRESENTS
1-1:30P	RIPLEY'S BELIEVE IT
1:30-2P	OR NOT
2-2:30P	DARK SHADOWS
2:30-3P	DARK SHADOWS
3-3:30P	JUPITER MOON
3:30-4P	JUPITER MOON
4-4:30P	KNIGHTMARE
4:30-5P	MY SECRET IDENTITY
5-5:30P	LOST IN SPACE
5:30-6P	
6-6:30P	VOYAGE TO THE BOTTOM OF THE SEA

TIME	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
8-8:30A	RETURN/PLANET/APES	SECRETS OF ISIS
8:30-9A	JOURNEY/CENTER/EARTH	ARK II
9-9:30A	G-FORCE	SPACE ACADEMY
9:30-10A	GALAXY RANGERS	JASON OF STAR COMMAND
10-10:30A	ROBOTECH	MISFITS OF SCIENCE
10:30-11A	KNIGHTMARE	
11-11:30A	NEXT STEP BEYOND	BATTLESTAR GALACTICA
11:30A-12P	SCI-FI BUZZ	BATTLESTAR GALACTICA
12P-12:30P	INSIDE SPACE	THE INVADERS
12:30-1P	CAPTAIN POWER	INVISIBLE MAN
1-1:30P	BATTLESTAR GALACTICA	NIGHT STALKER
1:30-2P		MOONLIGHT MATINEE
2-2:30P	MOONLIGHT MATINEE	
2:30-3P		
3-3:30P		
3:30-4P		
4-4:30P	RADIATION THEATER	
4:30-5P		PLANETARY FEATURE FILM
5-5:30P		
5:30-6P	MISFITS OF SCIENCE	
6-6:30P		
6:30-7P		

TIME	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
7-7:30P	MYSTERIES MAGIC	INSIDE SPACE	BATTLESTAR GALACTICA	SWAMP THING	SWAMP THING	THE INVADERS	THE INVADERS
7:30-8P	RAY BRADBURY	SCI-FI BUZZ	GALACTICA	RAY BRADBURY	RAY BRADBURY	THE INVADERS	INSIDE SPACE
8-8:30P	SCI-FI	SCI-FI	PLANETARY	SCI-FI	SCI-FI	THE INVADERS	INSIDE SPACE
8:30-9P	FEATURE FILM	FEATURE FILM	FEATURE FILM	FEATURE FILM	FEATURE FILM	NEW DARK SHADOWS	MYSTERIES MAGIC
9-9:30P						PLANETARY FEATURE FILM	RADIATION THEATER
9:30-10P							
10-10:30P	THRILLER	THRILLER	THRILLER	THRILLER	THRILLER		
10:30-11PM							
11-11:30PM	FRIDAY THE 13TH	FRIDAY THE 13TH	FRIDAY THE 13TH	FRIDAY THE 13TH	FRIDAY THE 13TH	FRIDAY THE 13TH	FRIDAY THE 13TH
11:30-MID	THE 13TH	THE 13TH	THE 13TH	THE 13TH	THE 13TH	THE 13TH	THE 13TH
MID-12:30A	SCI-FI	SCI-FI	PLANETARY	SCI-FI	SCI-FI	PLANETARY	NIGHT STALKER
12:30-1A	FEATURE FILM	FEATURE FILM	FEATURE FILM	FEATURE FILM	FEATURE FILM	FEATURE FILM	BATTLESTAR GALACTICA
1-1:30A							
1:30-2A							

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CAPITAL MALL, CAMP HILL, PA *
SOUTH HILL MALL, PUYALLUP, WA *
THE PLAZA AT KING OF PRUSSIA, KING OF PRUSSIA, PA *

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Many fine writers ignore this function. You'll find little rebellion in Asimov, and scant political content in Jules Verne. But turn to Welles, Ellison, or Philip Dick and you'll find storytellers who are also acerbic critics of the human species. Read Poe or Lovecraft and contemplate the only genre that can sustain prolonged meditation on inevitable death and universal despair, yet by virtue of its poetry is accepted as entertainment for schoolchildren.

This tradition extends to film and television as well; *Star Trek* has cloaked its political and social references in sci-fi garb since the days of Vietnam. *Alien Nation's* extended parable of race relations, *Max Headroom's* bold critique of the television medium, and Dan O'Bannon's clear-eyed exploration of humanity's self-destructive potential in *Screamers* are equal proofs. While I'd like to take credit for the fact that all three of these examples are represented in the issue of SFE that you hold, it was late in our publishing cycle that I noticed this connecting thread. And since taking note, I've been contemplating the rarity of such sharp-edged films and television shows.

Of course, there's the marketplace. Thanks to ever-expanding production expenses, film and television executives are helplessly caught in a numbers game; the audience must be delivered in masses for a studio, a network, or a production company to stay afloat. Can "serious" SF bring in the stratospheric box office returns, or the millions of viewers, that nowadays are obligatory? Maybe; but the decision-makers have films such as *Blade Runner* and *Brazil* and TV shows such as *Max Headroom* as counter-examples.

Of course, the fewer serious SF films that are made, the less likely we will be to see a brilliant one arrive, and the less likely it is that the major studios' publicity and promotional staff will know how to market it, or that critics will comprehend it. *Blade Runner's* box office was, in part, killed by film critics who seemed so unaccustomed to SF that they blamed the film for their own short-sightedness. How will the critics learn to get it right when their chance only comes once in every few years? Their most recent opportunity was Universal's *The Twelvetoes*; since I'm writing this in mid-November, you know far better than I do how that one worked out.

When I carry on like this, I am frequently answered with the canard, "SF is supposed to be fun!" And I agree, it is! But, while I enjoy the bright horizons of a film like *Star Wars* as much

as the next geek, my idea of *real* fun often involves a bleak, doomed world and a "hero" who is as much a misfit in that role as he is in his forelorn surroundings; a character that prevails solely by maintaining humanity, as he loses every other thing he owns, maybe even his life. Add a large tub of popcorn, and you've got me out of your hair for a couple of hours.

Still, I can imagine a scenario where all forms of SF thrive. Consider the forces that caused the Sci-Fi Channel to come into being, extended to the next century; picture a world where we all have 500 channels to choose from (for argument's sake, let's say that only 200 of them are shop-at-home channels). Picture also that digital effects, with third-generation hardware and software, allow artists to create worlds as quickly and cheaply as they can be imagined.

In such a world, the audience will be fragmented by hundreds of choices. As the audience splinters, America's millions will finally find something they like better than *Melrose Place*, as Dad drifts toward the 'Home Repair Channel,' Mom is transfixed by the 'Richard Simmons Network,' and my cousin Francis and his entire family is caught up in the fever-pitch of the 'Bingo Channel.'

While other audiences fraction and melt away, one audience, long known for its passionate loyalty, will remain steadfast; and thanks to that audience—the last mass audience left in the universe—the Sci-Fi Channel will lead a new era of peace, prosperity, and innovative made-for-video SF programming.

In the meantime, the mind boggles. Late reports tell us that the Fox/BBC/Universal Dr. Who telefilm may not happen, and producer Phil Segal let fans on the Internet know that the problem is not with Fox or the BBC, but with Universal. This is an extremely hard thing to understand, since Universal faces relatively little front-end risk; Fox is ready to air the show, and there's merchandising money to be made as well. Universal has shown courage in backing riskier projects such as *The Twelvetoes* and a \$45 million production of *The Green Hornet* (that includes \$3 million to George Clooney who, for all we know, could turn out to have all the box office appeal of Alec Baldwin as the Shadow). One is led to the suspicion that there are basic problems that have caused first Amblin/Dreamworks and now Universal to back off from the *Who* deal.

This issue's *Doctor Who* piece was assigned as a "background" to ready people for the next chapter in the *Doctor's* illustrious career, then scheduled for a May air-date. Instead, it's starting to look like a "farewell" article. It may be that the Time Lord will have to idle his Tardis until the next century, when the Channel is scheduled to take over the world.

—Ed Flixman 75663.2701@compuserve.com

SCI-FI ENTERTAINMENT

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MARK HINTZ
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CARL A. GNAM, JR.
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Editor

ROBERT MARTIN
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DELINDA CURTISS
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LEANNE SEDDON-TROJAN

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that. It smacked of 'cheap horror movie,' and I really was not looking forward to the number of times I would have to hear people call it 'Scatterbrain.' But it ultimately didn't matter, as by the time I thought of a title, it had been retitled *The Resurrected*, a title thought of by executives at the Live! Video company.

ALL THE LESSONS I'D LEARNED FROM my mistakes on *Return of the Living Dead* I successfully applied on the Lovecraft picture. I actually made a good picture; at last I had something I would sit and watch myself. But the producers of the picture, who were people who normally made "nudie" movies, had a strong personal agenda—to inflate their personal vanity—and they recut it themselves. They micro-recut it; usually, when a studio recuts a picture, they don't micro-recut; they will lop out a chunk of it, and the rest of the picture substantially retain the intended tone. This was not the case here. While I was directing the thing, this poor son of a bitch, the co-producer, this maker of nudie movies, kept showing up on set in a General MacArthur costume—a military hat with gold braid on it, a big military jacket and aviator glasses. He kept trying to give people orders, which they would ignore.

And while I was cutting the film, he would show up at the cutting room watching me cut. And every time I looked at him, his eyes were bulging as he looked at the editing table, looking like either a starving man or a horny man, I couldn't quite determine which. It was unsettling.

All I have now is a VHS of the thing in rough cut form, enough to show somebody if I ever really need to, but not enough to put in the theater, so that film is lost. It's not *The Magnificent Ambersons*, anyway, just a good film. But if I ever direct again, there is just one condition I will insist on—before they can recut me, they have to let me cut it, mix it, and print it my way and give me one print. Then, if they want to recut it to dog food, more power to them, let them do their worst as long as I can later put out a director's cut. That way, I can rescue my reputation, if not my pocketbook.

Setting aside the good films which have been made entirely by accident—probably more than we care to admit in that category, *Casablanca* being the classic documented case—to make a good film requires that the director have two characteristics; he has to be a sensitive artist, and he has to be a big, tough businessman, both at the same time. It's not enough to just be artistically brilliant; they'll never let you direct a film, and if they do let you, you won't ever get what you want on the screen. You will be broken like a twig.



A computer rendered spacecraft from *Screamers*—the film, O'Bannon happily acknowledges, closely follows his script.

People who can get what they want on the screen are usually some kind of 'captain of industry' type, a General George Patton; that's the kind of person who can become a successful producer-director, and we have an awful lot of those running around, who have no artistic talent whatsoever. And there are a small handful who are both.

But most people who have the creative ability to make really good films do not have the sheer toughness to fight their way through the process. If they even try, they take one good look and say, 'I'm not going to stay here and put up with this.' If they don't leave, they are inundated by a chorus of people saying, 'Do it this way! Do it that way!' And if they resist that, they will be told, 'If you don't do it the way I tell you, I will kill you.'

SFE: *Speaking of people leaving, is Ron Shusett [co-writer of Alien, co-writer and producer of Total Recall] still in the business?*

O'Bannon: I don't know. I imagine if you track him down, he would say that he thinks so. Ronnie and I had several years of great fun working together. Then, as I've seen happen to other people, he couldn't stand the success. There's an old saw that goes 'Some men are ruined by failure, others are destroyed by success.' Ronnie's the kind of guy who's absolutely terrific in adversity; put him in a down-and-out situation with no money and all the odds against him, and he's absolutely wonderful, rising to the occasion, defeating all of the dragons, to place himself at the doorway to success. Once he becomes successful, he comes apart like a cat in medical school, and I finally just couldn't work with him any more.

Total Recall is a good example of a tragedy for Ron Shusett, it was something we had worked on together for many years. And Ron came to love that script like nothing else he had ever been involved with. He was so obsessed with it that it became his life's mission to get it produced. It was such a good screenplay, you see, that nothing

was going to stand in his way. He was going to get it on the screen at all costs...even if it meant ruining it.

The picture got made. I'd given up on Ron, and, just before it hit the theaters, Ron called me to ask advice. He was running by me a list of directors, asking what I thought of them. I lost my temper at some point, and for a half-hour I just told him off; everything he had ever done that had made me mad. I just gave it to him.

When we got through with that conversation, I said to myself, 'I wonder if he's got guts enough to come back?' Well, he didn't.

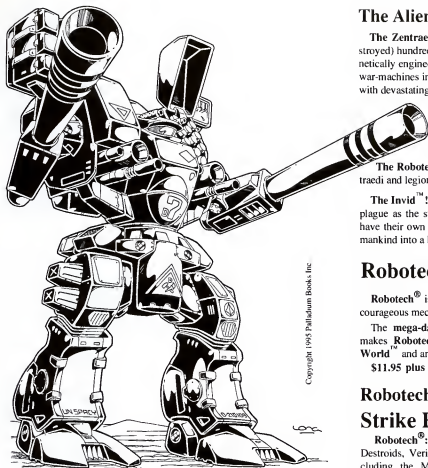
A little while later the film opened, I saw it, and I was disappointed. I picked up the paper and there's a piece quoting Ron Shusett saying, "How I got *Total Recall* made is a real Cinderella story," and I thought, "Oh, Ron. What are you? The pumpkin?"

SFE: *It seems to me that you've got a much better grip on this Hollywood business than was the case when we last spoke.*

O'Bannon: Oh, I'm in there, writin' TV pilots for the networks, schmoozin' with the guys. I couldn't do it before, because it was too important to me that I wrote stuff that was good. But that's all changed—one reason is that, no matter how hard I tried, I never wrote anything good anyway. That's a solid reason to drop your pretensions. The other reason is I got married, I have a kid, and I want a bigger house.

SFE: *One last question: If you could go back to 1973, and briefly advise film student Dan O'Bannon about what was to come, what would you say?*

O'Bannon: I don't think I would've wanted to know exactly what was coming... I think if I could go back in time to advise myself, I would probably cheat, and tell myself the plots of all the most successful films of the next twenty years. □



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DUSK TILL DAWN

Continued from page 63

enough to pick up a camera, Rodriguez made over thirty short films using his family of five sisters and four brothers as actors. "I made a few horror films," he recalls. "Before there was *Halloween 4*, I made a movie called *Halloween 4* for school. On Halloween night they were going to rent a horror film and watch it on the big-screen TV. And I thought, 'Those things are lame, they're all the same. You just wait for the good parts when everyone gets killed. Let's make our own film and have a campus killer just go around killing everybody.' So, I made a little ten-minute film. Nine deaths in ten minutes."

Undaunted by initial rejection from the film program at the University of Texas at Austin, Rodriguez went on to win several awards and film school admission with a video anthology of three of his short films starring members of his family entitled *Austin Stories*. During a break from college, he signed up as an experimental subject at a research hospital testing a cholesterol drug, and left with a finished script and \$3,000, almost half the money he needed to make *El Mariachi*, which went on to win the Sundance Film Festival Audience Award and an Independent Spirit Award for its one-man crew.

Rodriguez's first "Hollywood" film, *Roadracers*, aired earlier this year as part of Showtime's series of AIP 1950's remakes; counting the Rodriguez segment of *Four Rooms*, *Dusk* makes four Rodriguez features for 1995.

From *Dusk Till Dawn* debuts at Christmas-time; then Rodriguez goes to work on *Zorro*, to be produced by Steven Spielberg with *Desperado* star Antonio Banderas in the title role. "There's a difference between movies you like to watch and movies you like to make," Rodriguez says. "The movies that I'm doing now are movies that I like to make. People like John Carpenter, Sam Raimi, George Miller, and early Spielberg made movies that I liked, but that I also would have wanted to have made, as a creative person who has a hand not only in the writing but in the directing and editing and music—they seem like so much fun to piece together and create."

Rodriguez has advice in his recent book about making *El Mariachi*, entitled *Rebel Without a Crew*, that seems to apply not only to filmmaking but to any creative endeavor: "If you want to make movies you should already be starting to make movies. Even if it's on video or flip-camera movies—anything, because you've got to learn how to tell a story and how to put images together. You want to learn it on your own. You don't want to learn it in school; and you don't want to learn it in Hollywood because they're both too expensive and they emphasize money over creativity. So, the most you can do, the best you can do is to make a good movie with crude equipment. Then, when you get good equipment, you're going to fly." □



JANUARY - FEBRUARY U.S. PROGRAMMING SCHEDULE

DAYTIME

TIME	Monday - Friday	Saturday	Sunday
6:00	Informational	Informational	Informational
6:30			
7:00	Animation Station: Droids/Ewoks		
7:30	The Bionic Six		
8:00	Transformers		
8:30	Gigantor/Anti-Gravity Room		
9:00	Lost in Space	Saturday Anime	Mad Scientists' Kids Club
9:30			The Anti-Gravity Room
10:00	Beauty and the Beast		Sci-Fi Buzz
10:30			C-Net Central
11:00	Dark Shadows	The Anti-Gravity Room	Inside Space
11:30	Dark Shadows	Dracula: The Series	Mysteries, Magic, Miracles
Noon	Sci-Fi Series Collection	My Secret Identity	Space: 1999
12:30		My Secret Identity	
1:00	Alfred Hitchcock Presents	Swamp Thing	Starman
1:30	Tales From the Darkside	Swamp Thing***	
2:00	Night Gallery	Moonlight Matinee	U.F.O.
2:30	Ray Bradbury Theater		
3:00	Buck Rogers/Battlestar Galactica/Galactica 1980*		Moonlight Matinee
3:30			
4:00	The Incredible Hulk	Radiation Theater	
4:30			
5:00	The Bionic Woman		Radiation Theater
5:30			
6:00	The Six Million Dollar Man	TekWar	
6:30			

EVENING

Time	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
7:00	Twilight Zone	Twilight Zone	Twilight Zone	Twilight Zone	Twilight Zone	Twilight Zone	Twilight Zone
7:30	Monsters	Monsters	Monsters	Monsters	C-Net Central	Monsters	Monsters
8:00	Quantum Leap	Quantum Leap	Quantum Leap	Quantum Leap	Sci-Fi Buzz***	Sci-Fi Feature	Amazing Stories
8:30					Myst/Mag/Miracles	Film	Amazing Stories
9:00	SF Series Collect.**	SF Series Collect.**	SF Series Collect.**	SF Series Collect.**	Inside Space		Alien Nation
9:30					Anti Gravity Room		
10:00	Friday 13th: Series	Friday 13th:Series	Friday 13th:Series	Friday 13th:Series	sci-fi live online	Max Headroom	War of the Worlds
10:30							

LATE NIGHT

Time	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
11:00	Twilight Zone	Twilight Zone	Twilight Zone	Twilight Zone	Twilight Zone	Twilight Zone	Twilight Zone
11:30	Monsters	Monsters	Monsters	Monsters	C-Net Central	Monsters	Monsters
Midnite	Quantum Leap	Quantum Leap	Quantum Leap	Quantum Leap	Sci-Fi Buzz***	Sci-Fi Feature	Amazing Stories
12:30					Myst/Mag/Miracles	Film	Amazing Stories
1:00	SF Series Collect.**	SF Series Collect.**	SF Series Collect.**	SF Series Collect.**	Inside Space		Alien Nation
1:30					Anti Gravity Room		
2:00	Friday 13th:Series	Friday 13th:Series	Friday 13th:Series	Friday 13th:Series	sci-fi live online	Max Headroom	War of the Worlds
2:30							
3:00	Suspense Theater	Thriller	Thriller	Thriller	Retro TV	Radiation Theater	Tales/Darkside
3:30					Invisible Man		Today's Environ.

All programming shown Eastern Standard Time. Please adapt for your local time zone. Titles in red denote original programming. All programming subject to change. This schedule is effective through 3/31/96. *Buck Rogers, Battlestar Galactica, and Galactica 1980 are shown in rotation. **Sci-Fi Movie airs one week per month. SF Series Collection titles: January: Invisible Man, Mann & Machine; February: Mann & Machine, Kolchak the Night Stalker. ***Sci-Fi Buzz will be replaced by Trailer Park 2/16.

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JANUARY MOVIES

ON THE SCI-FI CHANNEL

MONDAY, JANUARY 1

9:00 p.m. Planet of the Apes
1968, Science Fiction,
Charlton Heston
1:00 a.m. Planet of the Apes
1968, Science Fiction,
Charlton Heston

TUESDAY, JANUARY 2

9:00 p.m. Beneath the Planet
of the Apes
1970, Science Fiction, James
Franciscus
1:00 a.m. Beneath the Planet
of the Apes
1970, Science Fiction, James
Franciscus

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 3

9:00 p.m. Escape from the
Planet of the Apes
1971, Science Fiction, Roddy
McDowall
1:00 a.m. Escape from the
Planet of the Apes
1971, Science Fiction, Roddy
McDowall

THURSDAY, JANUARY 4

9:00 p.m. Conquest of the
Planet of the Apes
1972, Science Fiction, Roddy
McDowall
1:00 a.m. Conquest of the
Planet of the Apes
1972, Science Fiction, Roddy
McDowall

FRIDAY, JANUARY 5

9:00 p.m. Battle for the Planet
of the Apes
1973, Science Fiction, Roddy
McDowall
1:00 a.m. Battle for the Planet
of the Apes
1973, Science Fiction, Roddy
McDowall

SATURDAY, JANUARY 6

9:00 a.m. The Venus Wars
1990, Animated
2:00 p.m. Day of the Trifids
1963, Science Fiction, Howard
Keel
4:00 p.m. The Blob
1958, Science Fiction, Steve
McQueen
8:00 p.m. Akira
1986, Science Fiction
12:00 a.m. Akira
1986, Science Fiction



Lon Chaney as The Hunchback of
Notre Dame.

3:00 a.m. The Hunchback of
Notre Dame
1923, Drama, Lon Chaney, Jr.

SUNDAY, JANUARY 7

3:00 p.m. Akira
1986, Science Fiction
6:00 p.m. The Utilizer
1995, Science Fiction

SATURDAY, JANUARY 13

9:00 a.m. Casshan: Robot
Hunter
1990, Science Fiction
2:00 p.m. Biggles: Adventure
in Time

1985, Fantasy, Neil Dickson
4:00 p.m. Akira
1986, Science Fiction
8:00 p.m. Robot Wars

1993, Science Fiction, Don
Michael Paul
12:00 a.m. Robot Wars
1993, Science Fiction, Don
Michael Paul
3:00 a.m. Fantastic Planet
1973, Animated, Barry
Bostwick

SUNDAY, JANUARY 14

3:00 p.m. The Dark Secret of
Harvest Home
1978, Occult, Betty Davis

SATURDAY, JANUARY 20

9:00 a.m. Vampire Hunter D
Animated
2:00 p.m. Godzilla vs. Hedorah
1972, Science Fiction, Godzilla
4:00 p.m. Destroy all
Monsters
1968, Science Fiction,
Godzilla/Mothra
8:00 p.m. Burned at the Stake
Supernatural
3:00 a.m. Destroy all
Monsters
1968, Science Fiction,

Godzilla/Mothra

SUNDAY, JANUARY 21
3:00 p.m. Wizards of the Lost
Kingdom
1985, Fantasy, Bo Svenson
4:30 p.m. Duplicates
1992, Suspense, Gregory
Harrison

SATURDAY, JANUARY 27

9:00 a.m. Lensman
1989, Science Fiction
12:00 p.m. 1995 Virtual World
Championship
1995, Documentary, Joan
Severance

2:00 p.m. Ritual of Evil
1969, Supernatural, Louis
Jourdan

4:00 p.m. Killer Klowns from
Outer Space
1988, Science Fiction, Grant
Cramer

8:00 p.m. It Came from Outer
Space 2
1994, Science Fiction, Brian
Kerwin

12:00 a.m. It Came from
Outer Space 2
1994, Science Fiction, Brian
Kerwin

3:00 a.m. Phantom of the
Opera
1925, Silent, Lon Chaney, Jr.

SUNDAY, JANUARY 28
2:00 p.m. 1995 Virtual World
Championship
1995, Documentary, Joan
Severance

3:00 p.m. It Came from Outer
Space
1953, Science Fiction, Richard
Carlson

5:00 p.m. It Came from Outer
Space 2
1994, Science Fiction, Brian
Kerwin

MONDAY, JANUARY 29
8:00 p.m. 1995 Virtual World
Championship
1995, Documentary, Joan
Severance

12:00 a.m. 1995 Virtual World
Championship
1995, Documentary, Joan
Severance

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FEBRUARY MOVIES

ON THE SCI-FI CHANNEL

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 3

9:00 a.m. **Demon City Shinjuku**
1992, Animated
2:00 p.m. **It Came From Outer Space**
1953, Science Fiction, Richard Carlson
4:00 p.m. **It Came From Outer Space 2**
1994, Science Fiction, Brian Kerwin
8:00 p.m. **Subspecies 2: Bloodstone**
1993, Horror
12:00 a.m. **Subspecies 2: Bloodstone**
1993, Horror
3:00 a.m. **Man Without a Body**
1958, Science Fiction, Robert Hutton

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 4

3:00 p.m. **Alligator**
1980, Horror, Robert Forster
5:00 p.m. **Seedpeople**
1992, Science Fiction, Sam Hennings

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 10

9:00 a.m. **Dominion Tank Police Part 1**
1990, Animated
2:00 p.m. **Conquest of Space**
1955, Science Fiction, Eric Fleming
4:00 p.m. **The Bug**
1975, Horror, Bradford Dillman
8:00 p.m. **Evolver**
Science Fiction

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 17

9:00 a.m. **Dominion Tank Police Part 2**
1990, Animated
2:00 p.m. **Bad Channels**
1992, Science Fiction, Paul Hipp
4:00 p.m. **Evolver**
Science Fiction
8:00 p.m. **The Lifeforce Experiment**

1994, Science Fiction, Donald Sutherland
12:00 a.m. **The Lifeforce Experiment**
1994, Science Fiction, Donald Sutherland
3:00 a.m. **The Skull**
1965, Horror, Christopher Lee

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 18

3:00 p.m. **The Possession of Joel Delaney**
1972, Suspense, Shirley MacLaine
5:00 p.m. **The Lifeforce Experiment**
1994, Science Fiction, Donald Sutherland

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 22

8:00 p.m. **On a Collision Course With Earth**
1995, Speculation, Mike Farrel
12:00 a.m. **On a Collision Course With Earth**
1995, Speculation, Mike Farrel

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 24

9:00 a.m. **Odin: Photon Space Sailor Starlight**
1989, Anime
11:00 a.m. **In Between**
1992, Supernatural, Robert Forster

1:00 p.m. **Warning Sign**
1985, Science Fiction, Sam Waterston
3:00 p.m. **The Lifeforce Experiment**
1994, Science Fiction, Donald Sutherland

5:00 p.m. **Time Runner**
1990, Science Fiction, Mark Hammill
7:00 p.m. **Time Travellers**
1975, Science Fiction, Sam Groom

8:30 p.m. **The Navigator**
1988, Fantasy, Bruce Lyons
10:30 p.m. **Project X**
1967, Science Fiction, Christopher George

12:30 a.m. **Cyborg 2087**
1967, Science Fiction, Michael Rennie

2:30 a.m. **Terror From the Year 5000**
1958, Science Fiction, Ward Costello
4:00 a.m. **A Gray Matter Comedy**

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 25

9:00 a.m. **Destroy all Monsters**
1968, Science Fiction, Godzilla/Mothra
11:00 a.m. **The Blob**
1958, Science Fiction, Steve McQueen
1:00 p.m. **Day of the Triffids**
1963, Science Fiction, Howard Keel

3:00 p.m. **The UFO Incident**
1975, Docudrama, James Earl Jones
5:00 p.m. **Agent for H.A.R.M.**
1966, Science Fiction, Mark Richman

7:00 p.m. **Hauser's Memory**
1970, Science Fiction, David McCallum
9:00 p.m. **Spectre**
1977, Occult, Robert Culp

11:00 p.m. **Night of the Comet**
1984, Science Fiction, Mary C. Stewart
1:00 a.m. **Fantastic Voyage**
1966, Science Fiction, Stephen Boyd

3:00 a.m. **Zardoz**
1974, Science Fiction, Sean Connery

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 26

6:00 p.m. **On a Collision Course With Earth**
1995, Speculation, Mike Farrel

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 28

9:00 p.m. **On a Collision Course With Earth**
1995, Speculation, Mike Farrel
1:00 a.m. **On a Collision Course With Earth**
1995, Speculation, Mike Farrel

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A lavishly illustrated book makes clear why *Star Trek* is an art director's dream.

BY LAWRENCE TUCKER

NOW I'VE SEEN EVERYTHING. Back in 1959, thanks to the Soviets' Luna 3 satellite, I saw the far side of the moon — which, curiously enough, looked just like the near side with a lot of Russian names plastered across it. In 1976, thanks to the success of NASA's Viking mission, I saw rocks on the surface of Mars; they looked ... rocky. And now, thanks to *The Art of Star Trek* by Judith and Garfield Reeves-Stevens (New

York, Pocket Books, 320 pp, \$50), I've actually seen the underbelly of a tribble. And you know what? Hidden beneath all that hair is an ordinary battery-powered toy dog.

The tribble isn't the only vintage *Star Trek* prop you'll

With its first half devoted to the *Star Trek* TV series and its second to the films, the book also features dozens of production stills, costume photos and design sketches, storyboard drawings, scenes from the animated series, alien makeup photos, set design plans, page after page of sleek starship models for the Federation fleet and its foes, and a whole arsenal of ray guns, stun guns, blasters, phasers, disruptors, and other exotic weapons.

The makeup photos are especially amusing. Over the years, in its many incarnations, *Star Trek* — perhaps inspired by the gallery of drinkers in *Star Wars*' famous barroom scene — has provided a showcase for aliens of every stripe and hue, and this book contains mug shots of some of the most memorable of them: aliens with freckles, aliens with horns, aliens with bad hair and bizarre facial protuberances, all of them proof that the show is a makeup man's dream. Scanning these faces as one leafs through the book, the effect is of a Halloween party combined with a visit to the U.N. delegates' lounge and a ride on the New York subway. The only thing these extraterrestrials share (as did their brothers in *Star Wars*) is that they're all decidedly humanoid; you are always aware, in these photos, that the eyes glittering behind the makeup and the masks belong to folks that, on the weekend, you might see sipping cappuccino in Santa Monica.

In movies and on stage, certain roles — roles such as psychopaths, village idiots, and victims of demonic possession — are said to be "actor-proof," in that there's no right or wrong way to play them (or overplay them); an actor can't fail to be convincing. The same might be said for *Star Trek*'s sets and props: when you're designing a show that takes place centuries in the future, you needn't

worry about authenticity. The book, for example, features a host of early designs for the original *Enterprise*; and while the one finally arrived at seems particularly graceful and appropriate, I suspect that this is largely due to its familiarity. Any one of the prototypes might have sufficed; so would any of the competing designs for enemy spacecraft, crew uniforms, and high-tech gadgetry. It's obvious that a show like *Star Trek* offers artists an unusual amount of freedom to design what they please.

Yet as this book makes clear, through-

find on display in this lavishly illustrated coffee-table book. It also includes photos of a Klingon camera and a Klingon accordion, as well as sketches of an outlandish-looking "Ferengi ear brush" that resembles a mutated toothbrush and a "Klingon judge's gavel" that looks like a cracked Easter egg. There's even a prop from *Deep Space Nine* — a metallic polyhedron bristling with electronic switches — that might be damned near anything: "Property Master Joe Longo admits that even he doesn't really know what this tiny Cardassian contraption is," the book explains, "but it's very popular and has appeared in numerous episodes with numerous uses."



Voyager's visual effects producer Dan Curry uses computer technology to create electronic sketches of possible matte-painting elements in the pilot episode.





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out the history of the series, especially in the early TV days, that freedom has been limited by the bottom line. Side-by-side photos, for example, reveal how, with a little ingenuity, the same set might serve as several different rooms on the *Enterprise*: "Production budgets on *The Original Series* were so limited that set walls could not be repainted from episode to episode to represent different locations. Thus the series became known for its distinctive use of colored lights to alter the appearance of background walls." Similarly, we learn, a backdrop painting of a 23rd-century earth city reappeared, slightly altered, as a city on "Planet Q," and paired photos reveal that a "lithium cracking station on Delta Vega was altered to become the Tantalus Penal Colony."

With the rise of computer technology, increased TV budgets, and the enormous budgets of films, *Star Trek's* props and sets have inevitably become more sophisticated. In its youth, however, the series was not above using cheap materials like plastic bubble-wrap and corrugated cardboard to decorate an occasional Klingon set. The very notion of "beaming down" crew members to a planet's surface was originally, in part, a cost-cutting measure designed to save on the use of scale models. (It also saved time.)

The realities of TV have imposed other limitations for designers. It's no surprise, for example, that weapons on the series should look unusual, futuristic, and, on occasion, alien (to conform to alien grips); but they also must be recognizable as weapons without having to be so identified in the dialogue. More important, they must be big enough and dark enough to show up clearly on camera. One of series creator Gene Roddenberry's favorite phasars, the book reveals, was deemed too small; it didn't look menacing enough, and the beams it emitted seemed to be shooting out of the actors' hands.

It's good to be reminded, as this book does so well, that the show's designers — those overgrown doodlers and dreamers — have probably played as great a part in its success as the writers and the cast. As the authors note, "Star Trek productions offer hope to all who have ever sat in the back of the classroom, doodling spaceships while the teacher drones on. Someday, a lucky few might get paid to draw those spaceships."

Halliwell's Filmgoer's & Video Viewer's Companion edited by John Walker (New York, HarperCollins, 740 pp, \$25 PB)

Don't be put off by this book's unwieldy title. Now in its eleventh edition, it lists more screen personalities and their filmographies than any other one-volume reference book available.

It is not a true biographical encyclopedia, the way, say, Ephraim Katz's massive and indispensable *Film Encyclopedia* is. Look up Dustin Hoffman in Katz, for example, and you will find an incisive six-hundred-word biography of the star, along with a list of his

films. Look him up in Halliwell and you'll find virtually the same list of films with only the briefest of i.d. notes ("Diffident American leading actor who suited the mood of the late '60s and made a big comeback in the early '80s"). However, on the same page, you'll find entries for, among others, Jack Hively, Jack Hobbs, Patricia Hodge, Ken Hodges, George Hoellering, Monckton Hoffe, Basil Hoffman, and even Adolf Hitler (whose entry lists more than twenty films about him); none of these names appear in Katz.

So if you're the sort who wants to know where a star or veteran character actor was born, how he or she made a living before breaking into films, whom he or she married, and the minutiae of his or her career, Katz is your man. But if, while watching some late-night movie, you recognize the galoot playing the butler, the posse member, or the third pallbearer from the left and wonder where you've seen him before, your chances are better of finding him listed in Halliwell's book.

Your chances are even better if it's a British movie you're watching, especially an older one; for while the *Companion* is commendably up-to-date on Hollywood productions of the past year, the series' originator, film historian Leslie Halliwell, who died in 1989, was a true Brit with strongly held opinions and no-nonsense old-fashioned tastes, a deep love for films of the past, and an astonishing fund of movie trivia.

One of the things that makes it suitable for browsing as well as for reference is that many of the longer entries contain a quote or two by or about the subject. Vincent Price reveals, "I sometimes feel that I'm impersonating the dark unconscious of the whole human race. I know this sounds sick, but I love it." Steven Spielberg notes, "I've never been through psychoanalysis. I solve my problems with the pictures I make."

The entry for Alfred Hitchcock, one of the longest in the book, offers a veritable *Barlett's* of memorable quotations, some of them containing worthy advice for aspiring filmmakers, e.g. "Drama is life with the dull bits left out" and "There is no terror in a bang, only in the anticipation of it." I'm not sure, though, that one ought to follow another piece of Hitch's advice recorded here — "Always make the audience suffer as much as possible" — and, according to Halliwell, the director himself backed away from one of his most notorious pronouncements, "Actors are cattle." Writes Halliwell: "His current star, Carole Lombard, promptly led a troop of oxen onto the shooting stage and herself headed for home. Hitch thought it discreet to tell the press: 'I didn't say actors are cattle. What I said was, actors should be treated like cattle.'"

Best of all is Halliwell's recollection of how Hitchcock, perhaps with *Cached* in mind, "caused consternation in a crowded elevator by muttering very audibly to a friend: 'I didn't think the old man would bleed so much.'" □

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ALIEN NATION

Continued from page 59

do it as cheaply as possible, and turn it into a cartoon—and I couldn't do that. They really shot the golden goose, because it could have been a really great human study of people under occupation as it was designed. It was a real heavy psychological drama, with just enough sci-fi to keep the fans interested, and enough weight to have everybody else care what happens. But they just took it into blowing up the power station of the week. They made all the wrong choices, and it was distressing."

Though he consistently hears rumors of a V revival, he warns fans to not hold their breath. However, since the successful video release of the original miniseries, Johnson has been discussing with Warner Home Video the possibility of a deluxe director's cut laser disc some time in the future.

Meanwhile, Johnson has a variety of other projects looming on the dark horizon. CBS is dusting off a TV movie pilot he created called *Sherlock Holmes Returns* which it is considering as a TV series, and NBC is planning to produce a miniseries he wrote three years ago, entitled *The Dominants*, about a virus that invades the human species, speeds the evolutionary process, and creates a dominant, master race of the infected.

While Johnson's feature film experience has so far been limited to *Short Circuit 2*—a sequel better than most of that breed—Johnson notes he's been "a bridesmaid many times," but financing usually falls through before he becomes a "bride." On other occasions, he's simply turned down projects due to their content.

"My problem is I probably have too much taste for my own good," says Johnson. "The movies I want to do are the one's Rob Reiner, Ron Howard, Peter Weir, and Alan Parker are doing. I want to make *The Commitments* or *Apollo 13*. I'm not interested in doing *Robo-Cop*, which came across my desk years ago. My agent told me I was crazy, that this movie could make \$100 million dollars. I said 'I probably will, but I can't make this movie and look at myself in the mirror.' It was just too ugly and violent. I would love to have a bigger budget and a little more time, but it has to be something I believe in."

Though he would probably still jump at the chance to do *Invincible* as he envisions it, Johnson has no complaints about working in the SF genre.

"Certainly there is an audience for it, and I think the great thing about writing science fiction, fantasy, or speculative drama is the opportunity to say 'what if,'" he says. "It's a place where you can really take a look at our society through the lens of another society, as we do on *Alien Nation*. It allows us to step back and take a look at ourselves, and ultimately allows us a chance to re-evaluate our own position as human beings." □

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The Series Collection

The Invisible Man

WRITER-PRODUCER Leslie Stevens, notable for his involvement with *The Outer Limits*, *Battlestar Galactica*, and *Buck Rogers in the 25th Century*, worked on a number of SF television projects between those years, and a few of these reached the screen. *The Invisible Man*, which first broadcast on September 8, 1975, was among them.

Stevens was not the only name on the creative team with genre credits; Harve Bennett, who had been a producer on the original *Star Trek*, and whose association with *Trek* would become even stronger with the first entries in Paramount's series of *Trek* feature films, was the series' line producer. In the title role was David McCallum, whose role as secret agent Ilya Kuryakin in *The Man From U.N.C.L.E.* had won him many admirers, and, in a supporting role, was Craig Stevens, whose *Peter Gunn* series had helped to start the long reign of "private eye" shows through the late '30s and early '60s.

Unlike Universal's own classic film adaptations that put Claude Rains and, later, Vincent Price in the title role, the MCA/Universal series abandoned all but the title concept of the H.G. Wells novel. McCallum played Dr. Daniel Westin, a researcher who had discovered the secret for making anything invisible. Unfortunately, upon becoming transparent himself, he realized that he had no formula for making things visible again.

Undaunted, the doctor conceived dozens of ways that his invisibility formula could be of help to mankind, until finding that his employers, an evil, giant corporation, planned to sell his work to the military. With Vietnam still fresh in their minds, the audience of the day understood that this was reason enough for the hero to burn his records, destroy his lab, and hit the road, along with his wife and fellow scientist, Kate Westin (Melinda Fee).

With the aid of an equally talented researcher, Dr. Nick Maggio (Charles Aidman), Westin was supplied with mask and gloves made of the miracle substance "dermaplex," a skinlike material that *Darkman* would surely envy. Masked, gloved, and clothed, Dr. Westin could lead a somewhat normal life. Normal, that is, except that every Monday night, at the 8 P.M. "family hour," we could rely on the doctor to strip bare naked and parade around on television (invisibly, of



David McCallum discovered how to become *The Invisible Man*. Now he just wants to be a regular guy again.

course).

While the pilot set up a premise in the "man-on-the-run" *Fugitive* mold, subsequent episodes were most often "secret agent" plots, exploiting both the logical advantages of an invisible spy, and McCallum's earlier television success. While the continuing search for Westin by evil businessmen kept him on the move, good businessmen, namely the Klax Corporation, financed Westin's search for an antidote to his invisibility and supplied him with freelance assignments as an invisible agent. Walter Carlson (Craig Stevens) acted as Westin's liaison to Klax.

One episode had Westin go undercover in Las Vegas to determine whether an eccentric, reclusive billionaire (Barry Sullivan, in a role modeled after the real Howard Hughes) was living or dead; another had Westin "haunting" a fake spiritualist (John Vernon) who was developing undue influence in Congress. Leslie Stevens wrote several scripts for *The Invisible Man*'s one and only season, and the show's writing stable also included a number of young writers who would later become television "names," including Steven Bochco, James D. Parriott, and Phil De Guere.

An earlier attempt to update H.G. Wells' concept, bearing the same name, appeared on CBS from 1958 to 1960. That British-produced series is most memorable for its casting of the lead role, Dr. Peter Brady. No actor was credited as playing the researcher, whose situation was very similar to that of Doc Westin. In this case, the invisible adventurer was played by two people; when wrapped in bandages, he was stunt actor John Scripps, and his voice was supplied by Tim Turner. □

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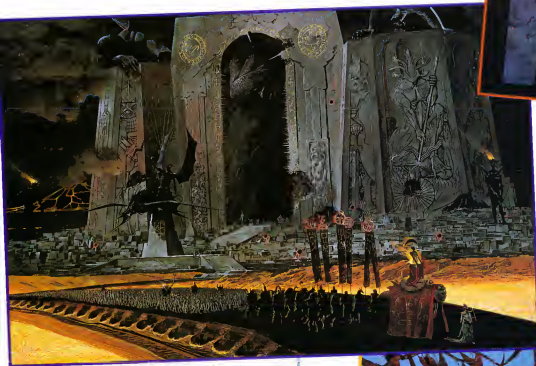


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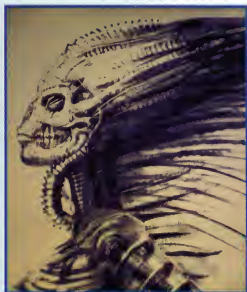
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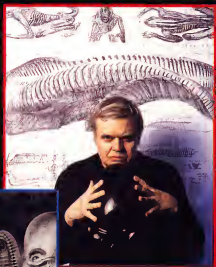
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Dear Ed,

I'm glad to see *She-Wolf of London* is airing on the Sci-Fi Channel and that you interviewed Mick Garris and Tom McLoughlin about their wonderful creation. It was an inspired premise that could and should have continued for more than one season. Of course, I'm biased — I was one of the two writer-producers who, as your reporter put it, "dominated" the show from episode three until the end.

Of all the series we have done, *She-Wolf of London* was the most fun...and our most treasured experience. We're thankful to Tom and Mick for entrusting us with it, and I'm gratified that the Sci-Fi Channel audience will finally get to see what the *Los Angeles Times* called "the Avengers with fangs."

Lee Goldberg
supervising producer, *SeaQuest 2032*
(formerly supervising producer,
She-Wolf of London)

Dear Ed,

I appreciate your coverage, in minute detail, of every business deal that Dreamworks SKG ever makes. But when will you get around to movies? I read today that Spielberg's next movie will be *Lost World*, but I have yet to see that movie mentioned in your pages! Yes, I suppose it is news if Steven Spielberg, Bill Gates, and Ross Perot take over the world tomorrow, but remember what's really important—movies!

Greg Hoffman
San Luis Obispo, CA

You didn't see that movie mentioned because the last time we talked about it, it was still referred to as Jurassic Park II.

Dear Editor,

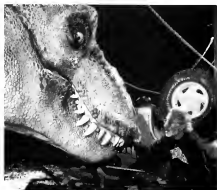
I just received my first subscription issue of your magazine and was pleased to find the first article I've seen on Terry Gilliam's new movie *Twelve Monkeys*. Including an interview with the man himself—thanks!

I was especially glad to see that Gilliam counts himself in the science fiction tradition, mentioning Ray Bradbury and Philip Dick, two very different writers, but a combination that makes great sense when you consider the man's films.

Dana Tobin
El Paso, TX

Dear Mr. Flixman,

I recently purchased the latest issue of *Sci-Fi Entertainment* and enjoyed it very much. My friends and I are huge fans of *The X-Files*



Now that Lost World, Michael Crichton's sequel to Jurassic Park, has been published, Spielberg can begin production on the eagerly awaited follow-up film. Seen here from the first film, f/x man Stan Winston and friend.

and were glad to see an article on the show, especially the full-color pictures.

Recently, we started watching the new UPN show *Nowhere Man*, which we absolutely love—even more than *The X-Files*! We would like to know if your magazine is planning to print an article (including pics) of *Nowhere Man* and its star, Bruce Greenwood. If so, when would this issue hit the stands?

Thanks a lot,
Shalu Duggal

Actually, Strange Luck won the coin toss (imagine that), and is featured this issue. But we do intend to catch up with Nowhere Man soon.

Dear SFE,

Thanks for the lengthy and informative interview with *Babylon 5*'s J. Michael Straczynski. Though many of the questions in it have already been answered on the *Babylon 5* Usenet news group, even a nethead like me learned a thing or two from the interview, and I hope the exposure in your pages will help to introduce others to this great show.

The *Babylon 5* article contained at least three errors about the plot of the series, however. At one point you referred to the ending of the "Narn-Minbari war," though I'm confident you meant "Narn-Centauri," as the Narn and Minbari have not fought each other. Also, the opening picture was nice and large. But it definitely was not Sheridan's old ship, the *Agamemnon*, as the *Ag* was shown in both "Points of Departure" and "All Alone in the Night." Further, the caption mistakenly claims that Sheridan commanded the *Ag* in the war against the Minbari. This is not true either; it is one of a fleet of heavy cruisers which was not built until after the war with the Minbari. During that war, Sheridan apparently commanded an old-style heavy cruiser like the *Hyperion*, which was seen in "A Voice in the Wilderness Part II." These

older cruisers were much uglier and lacked a rotating O'Neill section to provide gravity.

Robert Berman
Memphis, TN 38104

Let's face it—the B-5 Universe is too large to keep in our tiny heads all at once. We could try, but then we'd probably forget to break for lunch!

Dear Mr. Flixman,

I read in another media magazine that the next *Star Wars* film will be released in 1997. Your magazine states it will be out in 1998. How am I supposed to know who to believe?

Russ Chapman
Great Neck, NY

Both reports were probably accurate at the time of publication; George Lucas has been forthcoming in discussing his tentative schedule, and of course creative plans are seldom written in stone. Current reports indicate that the first film in the new Star Wars trilogy may not open until 1999, but do you want it fast or do you want it good?

Dear Ed,

I was delighted with your look "Inside the Toy Shop" at Pixar Studios. *Toy Story*, judging from the TV ads, does indeed look like a very different kind of movie.

But I was wondering, what is the budget for this sort of state-of-the-art motion picture? Your article didn't mention a figure.

Julian Kilik
State College, PA

There's an "official" budget figure (under \$35 million), but it means less than the budget on more conventional films, since much of the hardware, software development, and database acquired in the course of making Toy Story also establishes the basic groundwork for the CD-ROMS, animated commercials and other spin-offs yet to be unveiled, as well as any future feature animations Pixar produces—allowing Pixar to spread its costs among a host of projects.

We often can't send you a personal reply, but we still love hearing from you! Drop us a line. One thing you might ask is, why didn't we tell you that Mortal Kombat director Paul Anderson is lined up to direct Warner Brothers' space bandit epic Soldier from a script by David Webb Peoples? [Answer: We forgot to mention it until now, and this is our last chance to tell you before this issue goes to the printer!] We can be reached via E-mail at 75663.2701. @compuserve.com; when online, be sure to visit the Sci-Fi Channel's website The Dominion, at http://www.sci-fi.com; and we also can be reached through the U.S. Postal Service at Sci-Fi Entertainment, 441 Carlisle Drive, Herndon, VA 22070.

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